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THESIS

**STRIKING A BALANCE: SOF'S ROLE IN BALANCING
LETHALITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF
NATIONAL POWER**

by

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June 2021

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**STRIKING A BALANCE: SOF'S ROLE IN BALANCING LETHALITY WITH
OTHER INSTRUMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER**

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ABSTRACT

Twenty years of constant conflict in multiple regions across the globe have created a problem for United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM): it has become over reliant on lethality to achieve its strategic goals. This overreliance on lethality and the lethality default culture that has taken hold in USSOCOM has begun to have second- and third-order effects as the United States moves into a renewed period of great power competition. While great power competition historically has included periods of conflict and peace, large-scale combat operations remain less prevalent. This research investigated how special operations forces (SOF) can find the optimal balance of lethality along with other elements of national power and determined that balancing lethality with other instruments of national power can help increase the effectiveness of SOF operations, while supporting a whole-of-government approach. This thesis also addressed how SOF engages with the civil domain and expands its engagements to elements outside of security across the physical domain. This study found that USSOCOM must balance how much lethality it uses in great power competition while holistically evaluating other instruments of national power, depending on the conditions prevalent in each region or country that SOF engages in. Ultimately, this research determined that lethality alone cannot achieve victory in most modern conflicts.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
ADM	Admiral
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANASOF	Afghan National Army Special Operations Forces
ANSF	Afghan Security Forces
APC	Armored Personnel Carrier
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BDE	Brigade
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
CA	Civil Affairs
CMO	Civil Military Operations
COIN	Counter Insurgency Operations
CJSOTF-A	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CTC	Combat Training Center
DAS	Greek People's Liberation Army
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DIMEFIL	Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Law Enforcement
DOD	Department of Defense
ELAS	Ellinikós Laïkós Apeletfherotikós Stratós
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
GCI	Global Competitive Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNA	Greek National Army
GRU	Glavnoje Razvedyvatel'noje Upravlenije
ICAF	Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework

ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IO	Information Operations
IPI	Indigenous Populations and Institutions
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISIL	Islamic State in Levant
ISIS-P	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
JSOG	Joint Special Operations Group
JSOTF-P	Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines
JUSMAPG	Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group
KKE	Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas
KSO	Komandovanie sil spetsial'nalnykh operatsii
LEGAT	Legal Attaché
LOK	Lochoi Oreinōn Katadromōn
LRC	Light Resistance Company
MIST	Military Information Support Team
MDO	Multi-Domain Operations
MME	Multi-National Military Exercises
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NATO SOF	North Atlantic Treaty Organization Special Operations Forces
NPA	New People's Army
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
PA	Public Affairs
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PNP	Philippine National Police
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
ROC	Resistance Operating Concept
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SAF	Special Action Forces
SF	Special Forces
SFAB	Security Forces Assistance Brigade

SEAL	Sea, Air, Land Team
SOCFWD	Special Operations Command Forward
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOLO	Special Operations Liaison Officer
SOUTHCOMHQ	Southern Command Headquarters
TFBSO	Task Force Business for Stability Operations
TSA	Tactical Support Area
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
UAP	Unified Action Partners
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
USPACOM	U.S. Pacific Command
USSOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
USSOF	U.S. Special Operations Forces
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VSO	Village Stability Operations
WWII	World War Two

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) over relies on lethality to solve security issues in the global environment. The Department of Defense (DOD) continues to emphasize a return to lethal capabilities, asserting this will enable the U.S. to remain competitive in the competition phase. As the world grows increasingly complex, competitors of the United States continue to diversify the military capabilities available at their disposal to achieve their political objectives. Competitor approaches to competition include fusing civil and military capabilities, while leveraging multiple instruments of national power simultaneously, and growing their presence in the civil domain daily. This thesis researches how USSOCOM can enable the U.S. government to effectively compete in conflict and competition through an optimal balance of the elements of national power.

This research investigates five case studies and used the DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Law Enforcement) model to analyze each case study to assess what the optimal balance of each instrument of national power can be most effective in achieving a political agenda. Case Study #1, Colombia 2000–2020, identifies how the historically low U.S. military presence allowed the U.S. government to synchronize operations across DIMEFIL as it advised their Colombian government counterparts. Case Study #2, The Greek Civil War 1945–1949, uncovers a case where more lethality and military support enabled victory by overwhelming the communist backed insurgents with military assistance, firepower, and material support. Case Study #3, The Philippines, 2001–2020, looks at how USSOCOM helped Philippines’ security forces fight back against a budding Islamic extremist insurgency problem in internal areas of the Philippines. Case Study #4, Russian Annexation of Crimea in 2014, analyzes what strategies the Russian Federation employed in a hybrid environment across DIMEFIL to effect the annexation of Crimea and challenge the legitimacy of Ukraine. The final case study, Case Study #5, Afghanistan 2001–2020, investigates how much force is too much in the use of both special operations and conventional forces in a war with the Taliban and other factions still battling for control of the war-torn country.

This research found that while no two cases are ever the same, themes emerged from each case study that may apply to future conflicts. DIMEFIL is a simple model that has its own limitations and should not be the singular strategic tool for USSOCOM to craft a campaign for competition or conflict. Additionally, any agency or force seeking to leverage multiple elements of national power should find an optimal balance of each element that can be adjusted for the conditions of the operating environment. To be competitive in great power competition, USSOCOM must become comfortable operating in, through and with the civil domain and respective elements. Military training which includes exercises will always be necessary, but as the U.S. competitors adapt their approaches over time, the lines between the civil and military domains will continue to become intertwined. As such, USSOCOM must now learn how to operate and leverage other elements of the operating environment beyond its traditional military and security force partners.

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Finally, to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice: May what we do daily honor you and may our efforts never be in vain.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Twenty years of constant conflict in multiple regions across the globe has created a problem for United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM): it has become over-reliant on lethality to achieve its strategic goals. This over-reliance on lethality, and the lethality default culture that has taken hold in USSOCOM has evolved into having second and third order effects as the United States moves into a renewed period of great power competition. Lethality enables USSOCOM to excel at responding to crises, and U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) is often the first U.S. element to engage emerging threats. However, looking at the future of great power competition and the current shift in global geopolitics where threats to American interests abroad continue to rise, the USSOCOM must adjust its investment strategy in its use of special operations forces (SOF) if it wants to successfully address the many threats of the future. The future of conflict will require the USSOCOM to address the civil component in new ways where capabilities look more like a comprehensive social media marketing strategy rather than an antiquated leaflet drop.

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis seeks to answer two questions: **How can SOF find parity in its investment strategy for great power competition across all instruments of national power? What role does the civil domain play in an investment strategy for great power competition?** This thesis examines two hypotheses. First, no element of national power alone can create conditions for victory in a conflict or great power competition, and that the optimal balance between all elements must be found for SOF operations to be most effective. Second, leveraging the civil component of the operational environment helps SOF find the optimal balance of the instruments of national power, making SOF operations more effective.

B. BACKGROUND

Some research suggests elements of large-scale combat operations and lethality will be required in the future and that the probability of direct confrontation with near-peer

threats such as China or Russia continues to increase.¹ Other scholars feel that irregular warfare is the future of conflict, and that the U.S. is “woefully unprepared for this type of competition.”² Policymakers seek to ensure technological advances enable soldier lethality, which can be defined as, “A holistic series of capabilities, equipment, training, and enhancements that span all fundamentals of combat to ensure Soldiers are more lethal and less vulnerable on the modern battlefield.”³ Even fiscal management has been prioritized to focus on lethality: “Commanders and leaders at every level are responsible for ensuring every dollar appropriated to the Army is spent with the aim to build readiness and lethality across the force.”⁴ Expenditures during the Afghanistan war epitomize the U.S. Military’s overemphasis on lethality. Lethality, in the relative absence of a more comprehensive engagement strategy, has proven ineffective for achieving U.S. objectives after nearly twenty years of involvement in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the Department of Defense, the total expenditure on the war in Afghanistan since October 2001 through September 2019 exceeded \$778 billion.⁵ Compared to the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), only \$44 billion was spent on development and reconstruction projects. The U.S. government (USG) has the capability and the capacity to pursue a range of governmental and non-governmental activities and policies, which is why it is imperative for strategic planners to consider other elements of influence besides just lethality and force. While the competing narratives around the future of conflict continue to create friction within the department, what is clear is that if the DOD fails to develop an investment strategy specifically for SOF

¹ Raphael Cohen et al., *The Future of Warfare in 2030: Project Overview and Conclusions* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 53, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2849z1.html.

² Seth G. Jones, “The Future of Competition: U.S. Adversaries and the Growth of Irregular Warfare,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 4th, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/future-competition-us-adversaries-and-growth-irregular-warfare>.

³ Department of Defense, *The Army Strategy 2018* (Washington, DC: United States Army, 2018), 8. https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/the_army_strategy_2018.pdf.

⁴ Department of Defense, 8.

⁵ “Afghanistan War: What Has the Conflict Cost the US?” BBC News, 28 February 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-47391821>.

for the future, the United States may lose several strategic advantages it has developed over decades.

Great power competition historically included periods of conflict and peace, with large scale combat operations remaining less prevalent. The civil domain of the contemporary operating environment presents the greatest opportunity for USSOCOM to position itself strategically, so it is poised to gain strategic advantages when opportunities are presented, and ready to tackle crises as they arise. One of those opportunities is USSOCOM's ability to develop resistance capabilities in partner nations across Europe and the Pacific. Often, resistance capabilities reside mostly within the capacity of the civil population or civil government, not the military. The civil domain also presents the greatest risks for USSOCOM, as adversaries of the U.S. currently operate extensively in this domain, blurring the line between civil and military capabilities. Bukkvoll discusses how Russian SOF leveraged the civilian population in to impose more cost on the Ukrainian military Russia in the Donbas and Donetsk regions.,⁶ The USG has made its fair share of strategic blunders in failing to understand and engage with the civil society in past operations. The most recent Irregular Warfare Annex of the National Defense Strategy is clear: "Institutionalize irregular warfare as a core competency for both conventional and special operations forces, sustaining the ability to impose costs and create dilemmas for our adversaries across the full spectrum of competition and conflict."⁷

If USSOCOM desires to support this initiative, then it must delve into the civil domain, get comfortable working with entities outside of security forces, and capitalize on opportunities to combine approaches with organizations from select unified action

⁶ Tor Bukkvoll, "Russian Special Operations Forces in Crimea and Donbas." *Parameters* (Carlisle, Pa.: 2016), ProQuest.

⁷ Department of Defense, *Summary of Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2020), <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Oct/02/2002510472/-1/-1/0/Irregular-Warfare-Annex-to-the-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.PDF>, 2.

partners.⁸ Culture, economics, and politics that make up the civil society matter, often more than the military aspects of a country. Operating in the civil domain means engaging with organizations and entities with which the U.S. military does not traditionally engage. Warfare in the future, whether in the space below armed conflict or above that threshold, could require not just military action, but a combination of other elements of national power, be it economic, political or other. USSOCOM is in a unique position, as its forces are currently deployed to 62 countries, coming off of a recent high of nearly 141 countries in 2019.⁹ While USSOCOM's global posture is limited compared to recent years, U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) still presents an opportunity to expand its reach in support of the national defense strategy of the U.S.. Historically, USSOF are deployed to locations outside the realm of normal military activities, often engaging with numerous organizations and elements through the normal course of their assigned missions and duties. Now more than ever USSOCOM should identify ways to increase this engagement with elements of the operating environment, specifically in the civil domain, that are not normally engaged with by their conventional counterparts.

A key model used throughout the research presented in this thesis is DIMEFIL, which model includes the diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, and law enforcement elements of national power or statecraft. DIMEFIL will be used to evaluate how SOF integrates its operations into other elements of national power beyond the

⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 30 (Washington, D.C: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf JP 30 defines Unified Action as, "a comprehensive approach that focuses on coordination and cooperation of the U.S. military and other interorganizational participants toward common objectives, even if the interorganizational participants to refer collectively to USG departments and agencies (i.e., interagency partners); state, territorial, local, and tribal agencies; foreign military forces and government agencies (i.e., multinational partners); NGOs; and the private sector. Joint forces must be prepared to plan and execute operations with forces from partner nations (PNs) within the framework of an alliance or coalition under U.S. or other-than-US leadership. By law, the President retains command authority over U.S. forces. participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization." x-xi.

⁹ Corey Dickstein, "Fewest number of special ops forces deployed since 2001," *Stars and Stripes*, March 25, 2021, <https://www.stripes.com/news/us/fewest-number-of-special-ops-forces-deployed-since-2001-as-pentagon-reviews-decisions-to-draw-down-troops-1.667292>

military element. DIMEFIL represents the various elements a nation has at its disposal to affect its grand strategy in the international system.¹⁰

The United States government (USG) exists in a strange DIMEFIL capability paradox. The U.S. Department of Defense has an annual budget of over \$740 billion, yet makes up such a relatively small component of engagement across the globe with parts of the operational environment, security forces and militaries of partner countries.¹¹ Compare this to the U.S. State Department that has an annual budget of \$77.1 billion, yet is tasked with maintaining the diplomatic ties of over 180 countries around the globe with 58,000 personnel, less than a tenth of the personnel the military has access to including the reserves, all the while promoting American ideals and values.¹² The USG's culture of bureaucracy and reduced coordination and collaboration between various agencies has created a gap in U.S. foreign policy. Its largest, most well-funded and equipped arm, the U.S. military, is responsible for competing in and promoting U.S. interests in only a fraction of the operational environment. The remainder of the USG, when the budgets are combined and personnel tallied up, still do not add up to the resources at the disposal of the DOD, and yet remains tasked with dealing with everything outside of the realm of security. This creates a challenging paradigm for the U.S. as it moves into this era of renewed great power competition, and attempts to conduct hybrid warfare, or fight in the gray zone depending on which terminology one subscribes to.¹³

Differing forecasts of future conflict present a challenge in determining the investments SOF needs to make to achieve its strategic goals. Adversaries of the U.S. are currently fusing civil and military capabilities below the threshold of armed conflict to gain

¹⁰ John P. McDonnell, "National Strategic Planning: Linking DIMEFIL/PMESII to a Theory of Victory," (Master's Thesis, Joint Forces Staff College, 2009) 11, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA530210.pdf>.

¹¹ Department of Defense. "DOD Releases Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Proposal," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense. February 10, 2020), <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2079489/dod-releases-fiscal-year-2021-budget-proposal/>.

¹² Department of State, *Fiscal Year 2020 Agency Financial Report* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/FY-2020-Agency-Financial-Report.pdf>

¹³ Donald Stoker and Craig Whiteside, "'Blurred Lines': Gray Zone Conflict and Hybrid War- Two Failures of American Strategic Thinking," (*Naval War College Review*: Vol. 73 : No. 1 , Article 4, 2020), <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=8092&context=nwc-review>.

strategic advantages over the U.S. Often, these threats emerge in the civil domain, or civil component of the operational environment. These operations in the civil domain present a problem for the U.S. and USSOCOM. Traditionally, USSOCOM supports the rest of the U.S. military as it focuses on fighting and winning wars through direct action and large-scale combat operations. While lethality continues to be a necessity in the future, the USSOCOM must identify how it will compete in the civil domain, otherwise it may lose strategic advantages when crises arise.

C. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this thesis is to identify how USSOCOM can best find the optimal proportions between lethality and other elements of national power across the DIMEFIL spectrum at the ideal times. A secondary objective of this thesis is to identify how SOF can integrate all the elements of national power so that it can leverage the civil domain and gain strategic advantages for great power competition. This thesis will analyze the effectiveness of SOF operating in the civil domain and determine to what benefit or detriment those operations had on the overall outcome of the mission. It also seeks to show that the civil domain presents the greatest opportunities and greatest risks for USSOCOM due to the complex nature of the civil domain.

Currently, there is a lack of research that addresses how SOF leverages other elements of national power while operating in the civil domain. Additionally, past research has focused on how SOF operates with other agencies of the USG, yet it falls short because it assumes that only SOF can conduct military and security focused operations. No extensive research exists that accurately describes how SOF could find the optimal balance of instruments of national power by leveraging the civil domain. This thesis will not propose an enormous shift in foreign policy or a change in the budgeting and resource appropriations of various agencies. It will instead provide a new lens with which the USG can better understand the civil domain and how it relates to the instruments of national power.

Competing in the civil domain can provide a way to operationalize an entire population center not just in war time, but in any crisis. When a tactical commander moves

into a contested space with the task of securing that area, two things come to mind: fire and maneuver. This is exactly how the military is trained to think. Our military is trained to rapidly identify and prosecute the most dangerous of threats to U.S. forces and their mission, while prioritizing the deadliest first. But what if the most dangerous course of action of our adversaries is not their direct and indirect fire capabilities? What if the most dangerous course of action for our adversaries is the mobilization and intentionality of their societal civil components, which is currently happening in the shadows? Take for example the use of Russian biker gangs that have been used by the Kremlin to advance political agendas by riding throughout the Baltics and Balkans of Europe, expanding the reach and influence of the Russian oligarchy.¹⁴ Putin uses these groups because they are cost effective, as they do not require government expenditure, and they align with the goals of the oligarchy. China has taken a similar approach as it builds out its maritime capabilities. The functioning maritime militia is one of the ways the People Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has extended its influence in the predominantly maritime domain of the Pacific.¹⁵ China has steadily increased its maritime militia forces over the last five years. This is in addition to growing its coast guard and traditional naval capabilities. Russia and China are continually finding cheap solutions to imposing cost on the U.S. through non-military means. This increase in focus on non-military capabilities represents the growing challenges that USSOF continue to face from competitors in the civil domain.

D. METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses a series of case studies where SOF's involvement in the civil environment varied in affecting the trajectory of the conflict. It will employ the DIMEFIL model to analyze each case study and assess what proportions of DIMEFIL are necessary to craft an effective campaign for great power competition, throughout the civil domain. More so, specific analysis will be conducted to identify how SOF best integrates across the DIMEFIL spectrum as it interacts with other agencies in the USG and how SOF can

¹⁴ Peleschuk, Dan. "Hardcore Russian Biker Gang About to Invade Poland," *GlobalPost*. <https://www.pri.org/stories/hardcore-russian-biker-gang-about-invade-poland>

¹⁵ Jonathan Pyke, "The risks of China's ambitions in the South Pacific" The Brookings Last Modified July 20, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-risks-of-chinas-ambitions-in-the-south-pacific/>

otherwise operate in the civil domain. Lastly, case study analysis aims to investigate how synchronizing operations from each element of the DIMEFIL model can contribute to a successful strategy.

Each case study chosen for this research offers a different viewpoint as to how to balance USSOCOM's approach to competition. In Case Study #1: Colombia, 2000 - 2020, this thesis argues that USSOF has been successful in finding parity among the instruments of DIMEFIL which created conditions for Colombia to successfully start exporting security to other countries that require security assistance. For Case Study #2: the Greek Civil War 1945–1949, it argues that since SOF had not been formally established up to that point as a modern irregular warfare force, conventional forces took on the role of finding the appropriate proportions of DIMEFIL to defeat a budding communist insurgency. This case study raises the question of when do lethality investments need to be increased significantly when compared to other elements of national power. Case Study #3: The Philippines 2001–2020, this thesis offers up another success story where USSOF played a significant role in reducing the spread and effectiveness of violent extremist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria - Philippines (ISIS-Philippines). Case Study #4: The 2014 Russian Annexation of Crimea, this thesis argues that Russia leveraged its SOF and used the appropriate amount of each element of DIMEFIL to successfully annex Crimea. In Case Study #5, Afghanistan 2001–2020, I argue that USSOF failed to find balance among the elements of DIMEFIL, which is why this conflict continues to persist with no real victory in sight. In the ninth chapter, “Common Themes and Threads,” I sum up key lessons learned across each of these case studies, and hypothesize what conditions and approaches enabled either victory or failure across each of these case studies. Finally, this thesis concludes with exploring the limitations of research presented here, recommendations as to how USSOCOM can best leverage all instruments of DIMEFIL, avenues for future research, and concluding thoughts on how instruments of national power may evolve in the future.

II. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In time of Great Power Competition in the Pacific theater, competitors of the United States have increasingly begun fusing civil and military capabilities and strategies to achieve state political objectives as they leverage their elements of national power. USSOF must identify ways to compete in the civil domain if it wishes to influence the operating environment as the civil component makes up much of the environment. The USSOF engagement in the past focused primarily on engaging with partner forces focused in the realm of security. While this creates some short- and long-term gains in the security environment, opportunities for increased returns diminish as what happens in the civil environment affects the security environment.

A. CHINESE GOALS AND USE OF NON-MILITARY CAPABILITIES

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is expanding its sphere of influence with its rapidly adapting forces and desire for global hegemony in the face of the U.S. global establishment of power.¹⁶ This ambition challenges the 'de facto' U.S. position as the sole global power after the end of Cold War in 1991.¹⁷ Just as the United States adopted a predatory approach against the declining Soviet Union in 1983–1989, it is reasonable to assume China would take the same approach in preying on the United States. Its desired hegemony is backed by Chinese pursuit of economic dominance with its current share of 14.08% of the global economy in 2018, and rising year over year with the U.S. slowly losing global economic share of 0.65% in the same time period.¹⁸ The trade wars between the U.S. and China have escalated rapidly in the past five years. Chinese economic investments have spread to many countries throughout Asia and Africa (countries with abundant natural resources). In the end, China may pursue the annexation of sovereign

¹⁶ *China Expanding Influence in Europe and Eurasia*, 116th Congress, May 9, 2019, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-116hhrg36214/pdf/CHRG-116hhrg36214.pdf>.

¹⁷ Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), Project Muse.

¹⁸ The Global Economy, "Percent of World GDP-Country Rankings," *The Global Economy*, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/gdp_share/.

territory in the region such as islands and reefs in the South China Sea, and even Taiwan, in a campaign similar to the likes of the illegal annexation of South Ossetia or Crimea by the Russians.¹⁹ China has recently undergone a suite of military reforms to meet the capabilities demonstrated throughout the United States in the last thirty years of conflicts, including the DOD's ability to utilize joint operations and sophisticated weapons and platforms against inferior opponents.²⁰ USSOF has consistently delivered lethal effects utilizing precision weapons, special reconnaissance and close operations to enemy positions. China has made investments in not only its ability to meet the U.S. in armed conflict but also its ability to conduct irregular warfare, and seeks to develop its information warfare capability, demonstrated during the Hong Kong protests where China or a China state backed actor attempted to respond to the changing situation in Hong Kong on Twitter.²¹

The Chinese are also very forward in using non-military components as an extension of their military capability to be able to apply resources from all elements of national power towards advancing its political objectives. Take for example China's extensive use of the American film industry to promote pro-Chinese themes.²² Pen America, a human and literary rights group, details in their report *Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing* how China continues to develop its influence on the American film industry to not only censor what comes into China, but also promote PRC-regime friendly messages to non-Chinese audiences.²³ As the Chinese find alternate ways to challenge

¹⁹ Maia Otarashvili, "Russia's Quiet Annexation of South Ossetia Continues," Last Modified April 11, 2017, FPRI online, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/04/russias-quiet-annexation-south-ossetia-continues/>

²⁰ Andrew Schobell, *China's Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020): https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2798.html, 86.

²¹ Tom Uhren, Elise Thomas, and Jacob Wallis, "Tweeting Through the Great Firewall: Preliminary Analysis of PRC Linked Information Operations on the Hong Kong Protests," (Australian Strategic Policy Institute: September 2019), https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ad-aspi/2019-12/Tweeting%20through%20the%20great%20fire%20wall.pdf?TRGkGXh8FPY5KXLSc_4SfDUy7sMfNkw0

²² Benjamin Lee, "China continues to exert damaging influence on Hollywood, report finds," *The Guardian*, August 5th, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/aug/05/china-hollywood-films-damaging-impact-report>.

²³ James Tager, *Made in Hollywood, Censored by Beijing* (Pen America, 2020), https://pen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Made_in_Hollywood_Censored_by_Beiing_Report_FINAL.pdf.

U.S. influence around the globe, and in its own backyard, the importance of finding creative approaches to incorporating non-military elements into military operations and objectives continues to grow in importance.

B. RUSSIA'S GOALS AND USE OF NON-MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Russia's economic challenges following the end of the cold war forced Russia to seek asymmetric methods of warfare in areas such as the civil domain to continue to challenge U.S. hegemony. After the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia had several economic issues to rectify if it wished to grow its global position, while sorting through the Soviet era policies and culture that was left over from the Cold War. Yet Russia has found asymmetric ways to make what resources it does have go further. Russia has made significant investments in its special operations units such as its *Spetsnaz* units which make up Russia's unconventional warfare capability. This capability was highlighted throughout the Crimean campaign.²⁴ Additionally, Russian interior troops are generally left responsible for a counter-SOF role, focusing specifically on western and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) SOF.²⁵ Russia continues to develop its private military contracting resources that blur the lines between public policy and private interests for the regime.²⁶ Russia's investment in its SOF and private military capabilities enables it to engage in the civil domain, and operate in places that are traditionally viewed as not military action. This creates a dilemma for the USG, as it attempts to compete with Russia, with its military that has been almost exclusively focused on military action with most of its conventional forces.

According to "Russian Economic Policy and The Russian Economic System: Stability Versus Growth" by Philip Hanson, to reach its full potential Russia has focused on nine main economic and political objectives:

²⁴ Alexey Nikolsky, "Russian Special Operations Forces: Eight Years and Three Wars" *Elite Warriors: Special Operations Forces from Around the Globe* (East View Press, 2017).

²⁵ Nikolsky, 31.

²⁶ Tor Bukkvoll, "Russia and the use of force in the new Cold War – The Military Dimension," Presentation at Naval Postgraduate School, 24 October 2018.

1. Ensure sustainable natural population growth;
2. Increase life expectancy to 78 years;
3. Ensure sustainable growth of wages and pensions above inflation;
4. Halve the numbers of people living in poverty;
5. Improve housing conditions for at least 5 million households annually;
6. Increase the share of innovating organizations (a curious measure that is officially monitored) to 50 per cent;
7. Speed up the digitization of the economy and the social sphere;
8. Become one of the world's five largest economies. with growth rates above the global average and inflation below 4 per cent;
9. Support high-productivity, export-oriented businesses in the key sectors of the economy, doubling non-raw-material and non-energy exports.²⁷

These aspirations create opportunities for Russia to ascend to regional hegemony again. If not achieved, it begs the question what risks will Russia take to move itself back on top again?²⁸ Russian gross domestic product (GDP) Growth declined from 2010 to 2014 and even showed negative growth in 2015 before reverting positive again. Yet, these figures are still below the World GDP index.²⁹ It is also interesting to take note of global politics that have occurred, as Putin initiated his campaign to claim Crimea in 2014.³⁰ While it is debatable as to the true intentions of Putin to seize Crimea, the campaign did

²⁷ Philip Hanson, "Russian Economic Policy and The Russian Economic System: Stability versus Growth," (London, UK: Chatham House, December 2019), <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/CHHJ7799-Russia-Economics-RP-WEB-FINAL.pdf>

²⁸ Hanson, "Russian Economic Policy and The Russian Economic System: Stability versus Growth," 3. This report outlines the domestic and macroeconomic policies that Russia has implemented to achieve its listed economic objectives. It does not list the foreign policies that it may implement to achieve such economic goals.

²⁹ Hanson, 7.

³⁰ Steven Pifer, "Crimea: Six years after illegal annexation," Brookings, March 17, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/03/17/crimea-six-years-after-illegal-annexation/>.

prove to be popular with the Russian people and increased Putin's popularity and approval rating.³¹

Seizing Crimea most likely did not improve the Russian economy significantly, especially as Russia has had to put nearly \$10 billion into funding subsidies and major infrastructure projects for the area. However, the act communicates a strong position to the Russian people and the world.³² It also says that Russia can use a variety of means that were showcased in the Crimean conflict to achieve its political ends.

C. COMPETING WITH GREAT POWERS

Both Russia and China seek to grow their economies and have no issue using military power and other elements of DIMEFIL to do so. Often, Chinese and Russian objectives are regional in nature, yet they contrast with partners and allies of the U.S. leading to increased confrontation. The Chinese and Russian problem sets could give someone difficulty in seeing a clear way to deal with each respectively, not to mention the number of contingency operations facing the U.S. on a daily basis reacting to every year. The need for an effective strategy is clear. In his book *Rising Titans, Falling Giants* Shrifinson gives some parting advice that can contribute to the discussion of how the U.S. deals with this era of great power competition: "the fate of declining states ultimately depends on what fundamental changes in the distribution of capabilities mean for rising states' own power and security."³³ Both competitors have shown their willingness to adopt new capabilities to match the U.S. These resources present challenges for USSOF but can be overcome with enough guided investment from DOD through USSOCOM.

³¹ Pifer, "Crimea: Six years after illegal annexation."

³² Pifer, "Crimea: Six years after illegal annexation."

³³ Shifrinson, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants*.

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III. LITERATURE REVIEW

A new era of warfare has emerged with advanced peer threats, hard to track non-state actors, and a rise in diversity of non-governmental organizations that all increasingly transcend sovereign borders. This creates a complex problem for the application of force, and what the latest National Defense Strategy has coined as “lethality.”³⁴ While traditional assessments of USSOF’s ability to conduct lethality are high, what has caused a problem for USSOF has been the emergence of what modern scholars coined as hybrid warfare.³⁵ When Frank Hoffman first developed the term, he probably did not know how much the term would create an organizational problem for the U.S. military. While this thesis will not talk specifically about hybrid warfare, balancing each element of DIMEFIL into one cohesive strategy while competing in the civil domain is part of a greater hybrid warfare strategy.

A. COMPETITOR APPROACHES

USG’s competitors have developed their own versions of hybrid warfare strategic thought. Russia has displayed classic examples of their hybrid warfare capabilities, by fusing civil and military capabilities and leveraging all elements of national power to achieve one singular and focused strategic objective, in their campaign to retake Crimea.³⁶ While Sun-Tzu was an ancient strategic philosopher, his writings radically shaped Eastern strategic thought. Mao Tse-Tung took ideas from Sun Tzu and brought them into the context of his struggle to develop a communist state in China in *On Guerrilla Warfare* and *On Protracted War*.³⁷ The Chinese have their answer to great power competition, as

³⁴ The White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., December 2017). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

³⁵ Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), https://www.potomac institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf

³⁶ Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia’s Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, RR1498 (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1498.html.

³⁷ Mao, Zedong. *On Guerrilla Warfare* (Baltimore, MD: Nautical & Aviation Pub. Co. of America., 1992); Mao, Zedong. *On Protracted War* (Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1967).

discussed in detail in *Unrestricted Warfare*, in which People's Liberation Army of China Colonels Qiao Ling and Xiang describe an asymmetric strategy as a way to thwart the overwhelming U.S. lethality threat posed to China's military forces.³⁸ The Russians too have their answer to the next generation of warfare, that Valery Gerasimov highlights in "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations."³⁹ Both of these texts indicate that competitors of the U.S. recognize the value of a balanced approach to competition and conflict.

Analyzing competitor policies and strategy allows the USSOF to find things to apply to a USSOF investment strategy while addressing and countering adversarial strategies. Both Russian and Chinese current and previous investment strategies in the civil domain can be identified through the use of the Arthur Lykke U.S. Army War College strategy model.⁴⁰ The Lykke strategy model is a stool that provides a base for the development of national security strategy, where each leg is made up of a component: ends, ways, means. It is a useful model in evaluating how strategies which are a combination of ends, ways, and means, come together to form different national security strategies of states to achieve their political agendas. However, the Lykke model is simple and does allow strategic crafting of creative solutions that address the often complex nature of security issues. Looking at competitors and the USGs strategic approaches across the DIMEFIL spectrum allows opportunities and challenges to emerge that can define a possible future for DOD SOF investment strategies in the civil domain.

B. ORIGINS OF LETHALITY

But where did this appetite for lethality for USSOF come from? Scholars have described the evolution of stakeholders and how SOF over time took over various key

³⁸ Liang Qiao, Al Santoli, and Xiangsui Wang. *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Pub., 2002).

³⁹ Valery Gerasimov. "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations." *Military Review* (2016, 96 (1): 23–29).

⁴⁰ Richard Yarger, "Towards a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model," 1–8.

positions in the Department of Defense that contributed to the increase in lethal capabilities over time, which could explain this drastic shift towards kinetic action.⁴¹ Robinson et al. cites a key turning point in this SOF revolution, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, that added a fourth Special Forces Battalion to each of the four existing Special Forces (SF) Groups, one additional Ranger Company to each of the existing Ranger Battalions, and increased Navy Sea, Air, Land Teams (SEAL) manning by 700 authorizations.⁴² These additional personnel increased the lethal capacity of USSOCOM to conduct more raids, gather intelligence for drone and air strikes, and dynamically target terrorist and insurgent actors around the globe. While no one would question the capabilities of these premier special operations forces, it begs the question were they the right forces the U.S. needed in the long run to win the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq?

The U.S. can chart a course for the future and how it deals with the largest component of the operating environment, the civil domain, with the use of its resources from the DOD, State Department, and other agencies. Joint Publication 30 defines the operating environment as:

physical areas of the air, land, maritime, and space domains; the information environment (which includes cyberspace); as well as the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS), and involve conventional, special operations, ballistic missile, electronic warfare (EW), information, strike, cyberspace, and space capabilities. Included within these are enemy, friendly, and neutral systems that are relevant to a specific joint operation.⁴³

JP 3-0 recognizes the interactions among the various domains of the operating environment. For military operations to be successful, military planners must seek to combine capabilities and synchronize operations across multiple domains to create synergistic effects described in *Cross Domain Synergy Joint Operations Planner's Guide*.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Linda Robinson, Austin Long, Kimberly Jackson, and Rebeca Orrie, *Improving the Understanding of Special Operations: A Case History Analysis*, RR2026 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018). https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2026.html.

⁴² Robinson et al., 89–93.

⁴³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, 17.

⁴⁴ United States Joint Staff Joint Force Development (J7), “Cross-Domain Synergy in Joint Operations,” January 14, 2016. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/cross_domain_planning_guide.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-161956-230.

This guide adequately describes how military operations are conducted in the various domains to achieve success, yet falls short in providing a model for planners to identify how to balance various elements of DIMEFIL. It also fails to describe the why, how and with what resources or capabilities to engage in the civil domain.

C. INSTRUMENTS OF NATIONAL POWER

The origin of the DIMEFIL model is not based on research. However, recent doctrine typically references the original version of DIMEFIL, DIME referring to the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic instruments of national power. Other sources reference similar acronyms such as “MIDFIELD” adding the “D” for development at the end. One might consider DIMEFIL is a mental model -- a heuristic. Given that the problem presented here is complex, due to its many working parts, and often it is unclear what mechanism is causing a specific effect or result in the system that exists in the civil domain of the problem set, a systems approach will be used to analyze the problem. One tendency would be for strategic planners and policy makers in the U.S. to fall victim to the thinking traps of oversimplification or mirror imaging. Oversimplification in this strategic context could occur if strategic planners or leaders equated the nuances of each respective security threat or competitor, and used similar policies to address each either based on past experiences from situations that had some related elements, and then apply a comparable strategy to reach a goal.⁴⁵ Mirror imaging, which could even be a more potentially dangerous thinking trap for today’s strategic leaders and thinkers, occurs when the leader or planner makes the assumption that the other side or in this case competitor state, thinks and feels the same way that they do.⁴⁶ Mirror imaging is particularly dangerous as it can alter the thinker’s perception of reality. John Boyd famously asserted in his Observe, Orient, Decide, Act (OODA) Loop, if a state can alter the reality of their adversaries and create delays in their thinking to where what they perceive is much different than what is

⁴⁵ Zachary Shore, *Blunder: Why Smart People Make Bad Decisions* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2008).

⁴⁶ Shore, 161–182.

actually happening in reality, they can gain an advantage.⁴⁷ Through the use of deception and other techniques, it is quite feasible that this occurs frequently as the U.S. assesses the changing situation with its competitors. Cognitive biases and thinking traps are all prone to judgmental errors, which is why a systems approach is necessary to understand the problem more fully before determining possible strategies to address it.

One key challenge in balancing each of the instruments of national power is the unarticulated and undefined vision of a future end-state that aligns with the political agenda of the United States and encompasses all the associated stakeholders of the USG. John McDonnell addresses this challenge through the use of a DIMEFIL/PMESII model to conceptualize and achieve a unified theory of victory.⁴⁸ McDonnell goes on to describe how useful this model or a similar one can “record their logic and to track what the myriad activities of their plans are supposed to be accomplishing, then they would be able to better link those activities to the political end.”⁴⁹

D. PAST ATTEMPTS AT EVOLVING WITH THE CHANGING COMPLEXITY OF WARFARE

The Department of the Army has tried to solve this problem of recognizing the changing face of warfare in the past and developed units that could potentially help strike a balance between security assistance and other elements of national power. As the U.S. Army Chief of Staff from 2011–2015, General Ray Odierno guided the U.S. Army to adopt a Regionally Aligned Forces concept, where whole divisions would be aligned with specific geographic combatant commands, to encourage unit leaders to begin understanding the cultural and geopolitical nuances of their assigned region.⁵⁰ This idea has reached full concept and is employed to date, yet it does not fully address this issue of the often complicated civil and cultural components of problem sets faced in regions they

⁴⁷ Grant T. Hammond, *The Mind of War: John Boyd and American Security*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 2012).

⁴⁸ McDonnell, “National Strategic Planning: Linking DIMEFIL/PMESII to a Theory of Victory,” 12.

⁴⁹ McDonnell, 3–4

⁵⁰ Kimberly Field et.al, “Regionally Aligned Forces: Business Not as Usual,” (U.S. Army War College, 2013), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a598574.pdf>.

often find themselves deployed to. Units such as the 4th Infantry Division based out of Ft. Carson, Colorado has been aligned with the European theater for example, and deploys frequently throughout Europe.⁵¹ While the concept in theory should increase effectiveness of military operations in such locations, the reality is most of the time military operations remain focused on military exercises and military engagement.

Military exercises have come a long way in developing synergy across the USG and enable the DOD to practice integrating with other agencies. Frazier and Hutto see multi-national military exercises (MME) as an opportunity to identify shortfalls in tactical military doctrine.⁵² Units historically only engage with select military partners, and focus on persistent engagement through security focused exercises such as the Defender exercise series which started in 2020 and seeks to incorporate a variety of partners across NATO annually.⁵³ These exercises however are limited in scope and are focused on large-scale combat operations through developing interoperability among countries and increasing the capacity of select security forces units. SOF has its equivalent host of exercises to compliment this strategic approach of engaging with security partners, as highlighted in Europe with the Trojan Footprint series of exercises that develops relationships between NATO SOF units from multiple countries.⁵⁴

The U.S. Army recognized its inability to fully describe the contemporary operating environment and developed the concept of multi-domain operations.⁵⁵ Its publication, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations in 2028* describes in detail how the U.S. Army will

⁵¹ U.S. Army, “Mission Command Element: 4ID deploys to Europe in support of OAR,” *The Mountaineer*, February 20, 2015, <https://www.fortcarsonmountaineer.com/2015/02/mission-command-element-4id-deploys-to-europe-in-support-of-oar/>.

⁵² Frazier, Derrick V, and J. Wesley Hutto. “The Socialization of Military Power: Security Cooperation and Doctrine Development through Multinational Military Exercises.” *Defence Studies* (Routledge, 2017), 17 (4): 379–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2017.1377050>.

⁵³ U.S. European Command, “Exercise Defender-Europe 20 Announcement-Covid-19 Implications,” *NATO SHAPE*, March 17, 2020, <https://shape.nato.int/defender-europe/defender/newsroom/exercise-defendereurope-20-announcement-covid19-implications>.

⁵⁴ Marty Skovlund Jr., “Trojan Footprint: How U.S. and Allied Forces are training in the face of Russian Aggression,” September 08, 2019, <https://coffeeordie.com/special-forces-trojan-footprint/>.

⁵⁵ Department of the Army, “The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028,” Tradoc Pamphlet 5253-1, December 6, 2018, <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2021/02/26/b45372c1/20181206-tp5253-1-the-us-army-in-mdo-2028-final.pdf>.

“fight and win” in conflicts of the future that will require understanding and operating throughout the multiple domains of warfare. It goes further to describe limited aspects of the civil component of the physical domain and gives a short range of activities that can contribute to operational success for unit operations in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO), such as intelligence gathering through civil networks, countering enemy SOF capabilities that assumedly could be found to be embedded in the civil population of a contested space, and engaging civil authorities in the tactical support area (TSA).⁵⁶ However, these limited descriptions do not capture the complex, and often chaotic conditions of the operating environment that the U.S. Army often finds itself in. It goes on to describe the various areas of a war or conflict, that range from the Deep Fires Area to the tactical support area. While its helpful to conceptualize the contested space of the future in layers, this may not be useful when trying to develop a strategy to compete in the complex operating environment the U.S. military currently finds itself in that will only grow in complexity into the future. One scholar details this new age American military that has tried and, according to her, failed at blending civil and military capabilities as it continues to grow in its scope, and the problems it deals with outside of its traditional mandate of all things defense.⁵⁷

E. APPROACHES TO NEW AGE COMPETITION

Insights from historical cases help inform the future. For example, as described in *Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* with Robert Strassler and Richard Crawley, Brasidas operated much like a special operations team during the Peloponnesian war to leverage multiple elements of DIMEFIL to break apart the networks of the Athenian Alliance and bring them over to Spartan Control.⁵⁸ Early examples such as Brasidas’s operations show that military leaders in the past have dealt with this issue of applying the optimal proportions of DIMEFIL at the ideal time.

⁵⁶ Department of the Army, “The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028,” 28 and appendix C-4.

⁵⁷ Rosa Brooks, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything: Tales from the Pentagon* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016).

⁵⁸ Thucydides., Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides: a Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

Many have postulated on the role of SOF in great power competition and potentially large-scale combat operations. DeRosa et al. discuss the potential roles for SOF in great power competition in “SOF Paradigm in Great Power Competition”; however, the authors do not discuss how much lethality will be required for competition.⁵⁹ Robert Toguchi and Michael Krivdo do talk about lethality in *The Competitive Advantage*, which discusses potential combat operations in the era of great power competition.⁶⁰ The application of force and the decision of when and where to employ force is an inherently risky endeavor, and *Against the Gods* highlights how this risk could contribute to USSOCOM’s potential risk assessment of lethal action against the time it takes to conduct a successful influence campaign.⁶¹

Civil resistance offers an approach that could be potentially used by SOF to compete in the civil domain while striking a balance in DIMEFIL, especially in a country or region under repression. Kinetic actions in resistance movements are limited by the capabilities of the network; therefore, if SOF wishes to eventually leverage the civil domain to affect lethal action developing robust networks inside of the civil domain should be prioritized.⁶² The 2020 *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)* developed by Otto Fiala discusses potential implications of DIMEFIL on the outcomes of a resistance movement supported by the U.S.⁶³ *ROC* addresses DIMEFIL only as structural elements of the operating environment, and discusses the actions that must occur at the tactical level to enable a resistance movement without elaborating on how elements of DIMEFIL can support each other in a resistance environment. Lethal activities also are a small portion of overall resistance activities and are only possible with the logistics and resources provided

⁵⁹ John DeRosa et al., *The SOF Paradigm in Great Power Competition* (National Defense University, Strategic Multilayer Assessment: October 2017). https://nsiteam.com/social/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SOF-Paradigm_Invited-Perspective_FINAL3.pdf

⁶⁰ Michael Krivdo, and Robert Toguchi. *The Competitive Advantage: Special Operations Forces in Large-Scale Combat Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2019).

⁶¹ Peter Bernstein, *Against the Gods: the Remarkable Story of Risk* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999).

⁶² D.W. Lee, “Resistance Dynamics and Social Movement Theory,” *Prism* (Vol 6, No. 3.), <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/1020230/resistance-dynamics-and-social-movement-theory/>.

⁶³ Otto Fiala, *Resistance Operating Concept (ROC)* (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: The Joint Special Operations University Press, 2020).

to the movement through support from the population and outside benefactors such as in the case of the French Resistance, the Allies. As a resistance movement is not the equivalent of a professional military force and is often pitted against oppressive security forces trained in counterinsurgency operations, the underground must be selective in its targeting of its opposition. When resistance movements do decide to act in a lethal manner, such actions must be assessed for their strategic contributions to the overall campaign.

Popular support is paramount in running an effective resistance movement.⁶⁴ Using influence and information in a targeted campaign can build support for the movement, develop support zones for resistance members, counter occupier narratives and disrupt occupiers attempts at pacifying the population. An influence campaign can also help the resistance blend in with the population and reduce chances of detection. Additionally, an influence campaign can encourage the regular population that may not actively be resisting to find passive ways to resist occupation and impose cost on the regime. Influence campaigns are also risky because they require either a lot of resources or a lot of influential people to reinforce messaging. The more of the population that resists, the more cost is imposed on occupiers making it more and more difficult to maintain legitimacy and governance of an occupation. Having looked at past approaches to competition and conflict in the civil domain, research in this thesis focuses on applying the DIMEFIL model in analyzing each of the following case studies.

⁶⁴ Paul Tompkins and Robert R. Leonhard. "The Science of Resistance," *Small Wars Journal*, 24 February 2017, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-science-of-resistance>.

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IV. CASE STUDY #1: COLOMBIA, 2000–2020

A. INTRODUCTION

USSOF maintains a long history of being involved in Colombia, dating back to the 1950s when U.S. Army Rangers trained a new elite unit in the Colombian Army called *Lancers*.⁶⁵ This early engagement by USSOF opened the door for continued involvement over the course of the remainder of the 20th century and well into the 21st century. One interesting perspective on Colombia is how a minimal presence, specifically from SOF, has allowed Colombia to become one of the premier security partners of the U.S. in Latin America.⁶⁶ “At any given time, there are more than 100 USSOF members in country. We have been here so long that we know the country inside and out,” Lt. Col. Scott Morley stated in an interview with *Special Warfare* magazine for its Summer 2018 issue.⁶⁷ This small presence has certainly been the preferred approach of current and past administrations to maintain popular support from the people of the United States, which was exacerbated in May 2020 when President Donald Trump ordered the deployment of 50 soldiers from a Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB) to help with the changing counter-narcotics mission in Colombia.⁶⁸ Looking at this specific case of how USSOF has operated in Colombia and engaged heavily with civil components of the environment of Colombia can give insights as to how an effective strategy for USSOF can make similar investments at a lower cost around the globe in support of great power competition.

Plan Colombia has been an instrumental step for moving Colombia towards long term stability. News outlet *Washington Post* described the USG undertaking in Colombia

⁶⁵ Janice Burton, “Colombia,” *Special Warfare Magazine*, July-September 2018, <https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW3103/Columbia.pdf>, 54.

⁶⁶ Dan Restrepo, “The United States and Colombia: From Security Partners to Global Partners in Peace,” *Center for American Progress*, February 2nd, 2016. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2016/02/02/130251/the-united-states-and-colombia-from-security-partners-to-global-partners-in-peace/>

⁶⁷ Burton, “Colombia.”

⁶⁸ Kyle Rempfer, “Army SFAB Troops will be dispatched to Colombia Next Month,” *Army Times*, May 28, 2020, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2020/05/28/army-sfab-troops-will-be-dispatched-to-colombia-next-month/>.

best, “After 16 years and \$10 billion, the once-controversial security aid package is celebrated today by many Republicans and Democrats in Congress as one of the top U.S. foreign policy achievements of the 21st century.”⁶⁹ The case of U.S. involvement in Colombia may help illustrate how USSOF can maintain a relatively low presence over sustained periods of time in supporting a whole-of-government approach, while leveraging elements of the civil component to achieve strategic gains. Investment by SOF in Colombia made up a relatively smaller package when compared to investments from the rest of the USG. Colombia is a useful model to consider how a limited U.S. military presence can and should maximize all elements of DIMEFIL to achieve its strategic objectives.

B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE

The U.S. has taken a diversified approach to not only improving its relations with Colombia, but also helping stymie the development of the drug trade and increasing the capacity of Colombia to defend its sovereignty both internally and externally from a variety of threats. This consistent presence of USSOF over time accompanied with investments in other elements of DIMEFIL such as economic and law enforcement has created conditions for Colombia to progress with some stability into the 21st century. Recent U.S. involvement in Colombia has primarily been focused on providing military assistance in the form of military training for its regular military units and its special operations units. Colombia has undergone significant force structure changes that have allowed it to adapt to the ever-changing security environment it faces internally, such as its long history fighting the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), and externally, with the consistent threat of Venezuela on its eastern border.

C. CASE STUDY EVALUATION

Looking at this case study, the pre-determined evaluation criteria will be used to identify how the approach was crafted and what proportion was applied to each of the

⁶⁹ Nick Miroff, “‘Plan Colombia: How Washington learned to love Latin American intervention again,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/plan-colombia-how-washington-learned-to-love-latin-american-intervention-again/2016/09/18/ddaeae1c-3199-4ea3-8d0f-69ee1cbda589_story.html.

elements of DIMEFIL. Each element of national power will be evaluated and pointing out successes and failures of how SOF integrates capabilities across the DIMEFIL spectrum to engage the civil domain.

1. Diplomatic

The United States has maintained a diplomatic presence in Colombia since 1822.⁷⁰ The U.S. approach to its relations with Colombia represents a whole-of-government approach, as well as encouraging Colombia to take a similar approach to the challenges it has faced in the last 10 years to include its counter-narcotic efforts and dealing with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis.⁷¹ At the outset of Plan Colombia, by 2003 the U.S. Embassy to Colombia was the largest U.S. embassy in the world, as nearly 5,000 diplomats and contractors supported diplomatic efforts in country.⁷² The positioning of key personnel and forces who work directly with embassy staff has been a critical component of USSOF involvement with the diplomatic element in Colombia. Key personnel include the Special Operations Liaison Officer (SOLO) and other SOF members from the Special Operations Command Forward (SOCFWD) who report directly to Theater Special Operations Command South (TSOC).⁷³ This forward positioning of personnel who can help articulate the status of SOF to embassy leadership has helped enable better coordination and more fluid operations that achieve great effects.

One of those success stories was a 2008 pseudo-operation that was coordinated by elements from the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, USSOF, and members of the Colombian military to free fifteen hostages that had been taken by the FARC in Operation Jaque. A pseudo-operation is one in which government forces infiltrate insurgent controlled units by imitating of insurgent actors.⁷⁴ Leading up to the operation, the Colombians approached

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Colombia,” *U.S. Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-colombia/>.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Colombia.”

⁷² Miroff, “Plan Colombia: How Washington learned to love Latin American intervention again.”

⁷³ Burton, “Colombia,” 55–56.

⁷⁴ Xander Causwell, “The Logic of Pseudo-Operations: Lessons from the Rhodesian Bush War” in *Georgetown Security Studies Review*. May 31, 2018, [Georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org](https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org).

the U.S. Ambassador at the time, William Brownfield with an audacious plan to execute the pseudo-operation.⁷⁵ After much careful review of the operation, the U.S. Ambassador presented the option to the U.S. President, George W. Bush, who after consulting with his National Security Council, approved the operation.⁷⁶ Throughout the planning and execution of this operation, USSOF, Colombian military, Colombian government, and U.S. State Department personnel worked side by side till mission completion. The operation highlighted the high functioning ability for multiple elements of both the USG, the Colombian government, military forces from both countries and even private organizations to work together across the DIMEFIL spectrum to achieve one objective: the release of hostages.⁷⁷ Even more so, as this was a Colombian planned and executed operation, it showcased how effective U.S. military assistance to include SOF training had developed the Colombian military to a point to be able to carry out this mission.

2. Information

Often, SOF work directly with both USG agencies and not just collaborate on operations but enable those agencies operations, as security is often a limiting factor in determining where they can execute operations. This ground up approach has created opportunities for SOF to directly impact remote areas of Colombia that have been prone to insurgent activity. For example, psychological operations teams have operated in Colombia for several years in concert with other USSOF forces. In previous years, psychological operations (PSYOPs) worked to support demobilization programs and counter FARC information campaigns that directly targeted children for recruitment.⁷⁸ PSYOPs team found ways to support interagency efforts by linking their programming with existing programs such as the “Yo Soy” campaign which focused on supporting the hopes and

⁷⁵ Jeffrey Connor, “Operación Jaque: The Colombian Hostage Rescue,” (April 2012), 11–12.

⁷⁶ Connor, 12.

⁷⁷ Connor, “Operación Jaque: The Colombian Hostage Rescue.”

⁷⁸ Burton, “Colombia,” 30.

dreams of families, tying their messaging back to a secure government that could prevent their children from being recruited by insurgents.⁷⁹

3. Military

One of the key components that has set military operations apart in Colombia from other areas of responsibility in both Latin America and around the globe has been a significant engagement with civil society. Civil Affairs (CA) units have been persistently engaged in Colombia since the 1990s.⁸⁰ This engagement has focused on engaging Colombian law enforcement, government agencies, non-governmental organizations operating throughout Colombia, and professional services such as doctors and engineers. USSOF, to include U.S. Army Civil Affairs and PSYOPs, helped develop a civil affairs and PSYOPs capability within the Colombian army itself so it can engage with and support its own people in the conduct of counter-narcotics operations or when battling the FARC.⁸¹

Foreign military financing in Colombia (FMF) has hovered between \$53-25 million dollars from 2009 - 2017.⁸² While some might argue that is significant spending, it pales in comparison to countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq which collectively made up 19% of the total expenditure of security assistance programs in FY 2016.⁸³ While the military assistance supplied to Colombia over the last several decades certainly has been helpful in improving its security situation, it is reasonable to deduce that this approach to how and in what ways military assistance has been employed, specifically USSOF as it has made up a majority of the military assistance provided to Colombia, shaped the improving outcome in Colombia.

⁷⁹ Burton, 30.

⁸⁰ Robert Jones, "Civil Affairs in Colombia," *Veritas*, Vol 2., No. 4 (2006), https://arsof-history.org/articles/v2n4_ca_in_colombia_page_1.html.

⁸¹ Burton, "Colombia."

⁸² U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Military Financing Accounting Summary," <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm>.

⁸³ Susan B. Epstein, *U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview and Funding*, R45091 (Congressional Research Service, February 1, 2018), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R45091.pdf> Pg. 6.

4. Economic

Economic aid from the United States to Colombia has continued to grow since 2016, reaching 187.3 million dollars in total economic and development support to the country.⁸⁴ This economic support has translated into an increase in economic competitiveness for Colombia, moving up to 61st place in the world according to the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI). Looking at the local level, a common misconception is the simple solution of increasing economic and development aid to address assumed “root causes” of conflict including social mobility or economic opportunity. The case of Colombia suggests this is not necessarily the case, as significant economic aid has been poured into the country, yet violence has persisted to include the FARC splinter group, the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), and the determined narco-terrorist groups. However, what has become clear and is an effective strategy in the case of Colombia has been the combining of effects, and employment of multiple elements to achieve security objectives, after the securing of a population.

Dollars can come in, go out, and their true effect may never be truly measured. Foreign Direct Investment increased from 11.5 billion dollars to 14.5 billion dollars from 2019 to 2020, albeit mostly into extractive industries such as oil and mining.⁸⁵ This foreign direct investment, when measured with other investments specifically from the U.S. Government totaling 418.1 million dollars in 2019, shows that dollars matter and using incentives and making investments with finances can shape the outcome of policy in a country. For example, one of those programs supported by U.S. financial funding includes the Colombian Government’s Agency for Reintegration. This U.S. funded and Colombian run agency has, “assisted the reintegration efforts of approximately 26,000 demobilized former combatants to date, and works to provide education, vocational training, grants for

⁸⁴ June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background and U.S. Relations*, R48313 (Congressional Research Service, November 29, 2019), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R48313.pdf>. 32.

⁸⁵ United Nations, *World Investment Report 2020: International Production Beyond the Pandemic*, New York: United Nations Publications, 2020), https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/wir2020_en.pdf. pg. 51

microbusiness projects, health care, and support finding employment opportunities.”⁸⁶ Additionally, funding that supports lines of effort not just in the security realm seem to contribute overall long-term improvement to the security situation, as other problems begin to be resolved, such as two cases presented here of children being recruited, or demobilization efforts.

5. Financial

The impacts of financial components in the operational environment are certainly among the toughest to assess with regard to the overall contribution of efforts to effect change in the security situation, despite the USG’s ability to track relevant financial data. The FARC have long used coca production to fund revolutionary activities. However, using illicit goods as a source of funding creates financial challenges that the FARC solved by laundering a majority of its income it received from protecting coca farmers and enabling drug cartel operations.⁸⁷ Research into U.S. Treasury operations in Colombia did not identify many specifics for analysis, especially since it was difficult to identify what, if any, overlaps existed between SOF operations and Treasury operations. U.S. Treasury operations have historically supported reducing the availability of financial assets to drug cartel leadership and associated entities. Treasury has often sanctioned specific members of an organization or an entire organization, which prevents financial assets from being leveraged by that organization, as in the case of Pedro Luis Zuleta Noscue, who the U.S. Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned in October of 2018.⁸⁸ Noscue also had ties to the FARC, which shows how Treasury operations can supplement broader goals and support other elements of DIMEFIL beyond cracking down on narco-

⁸⁶ David Sosa, “Peace Colombia: The Success of U.S. Foreign Assistance in South America,” *U.S. Global Leadership Coalition*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.usglc.org/blog/peace-colombia-the-success-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-in-south-america/>.

⁸⁷ Thomas R. Cook, “The Financial Arm of the FARC: A Threat Finance Perspective,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, No. 1 (2011), <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1072&context=jss>, 22.

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions Colombian Narcotics Trafficker With Ties to the FARC and La Oficina de Envigado,” *U.S. Department of Treasury, Press Releases*, October 18, 2018, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm529>.

traffickers; and investments garner the best return when programs are linked across agencies.

6. Intelligence

Intelligence undoubtedly drives any military operation; but how can intelligence impact the civil society? In a complex environment like Colombia, interested parties are always competing for control of their area and looking to advance their agenda, which creates tough dilemmas for Colombian security forces and their USSOF advisors. One collaborative intelligence initiative was the establishment of an interagency intelligence fusion center at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota.⁸⁹ As Spencer, author of *Lessons from Colombia's Road to Recovery, 1982–2010* puts it, “The sharing of intelligence among the police, the armed forces, and the civilian intelligence agencies has been a key component of Colombia’s ability to locate, kill, or capture enemy HVTs.”⁹⁰

Consider again the case of Operation Jaqué. After years of intelligence activities, all that work came to head when the helicopters that had Colombian operatives dressed as news crew launched in 2008 to free the fifteen hostages currently being held by the FARC. Colombians often would cite some of their most valuable training and intelligence being one of them.⁹¹ Clearly, the Colombians had developed their intelligence capability, recognizing its value, most likely with U.S. support, and effectively used it to support other elements of DIMEFIL as it engaged the civil society in the conduct of operations through its civil affairs and psychological operations units and others. More importantly, USSOF and the Colombians alike found an optimal balance between leveraging intelligence to target insurgent leadership, while recognizing that lethality was not the most important operation.

⁸⁹ Spencer, Spencer, David E., and Alejandro Arbeláez. 2012. *Lessons from Colombia's Road to Recovery, 1982–2010* Washington, District of Columbia: Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University. <https://permanent.fdlp.gov/gpo119355/Lessons%20from%20Colombia%27s%20Road%20to%20Recovery.pdf>, 38.

⁹⁰ Spencer et. al., 12.

⁹¹ Mark Moyar, Hector Pagan, and Wil R Griego, *Persistent Engagement in Colombia* (Macdill AFB: Joint Special Operations University, July 2014), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA617138.pdf>, 52

7. Law Enforcement

Not only do SOF partner with Colombian military units, but they also step in to work closely with and develop the capabilities of police units.⁹² This extends beyond individual unit engagement and training. Capabilities developed during training from USSOF have enabled the Colombians to establish a significant sensitive sight exploitation capability that bolstered the Colombians ability to develop cases against various criminal elements.⁹³ Special Forces and Navy SEAL units have trained extensively with members of the Armada Nacional de Colombia which set up a joint task force by working with police units in the city of Tumaco, an origin point for significant narco-trafficking.

D. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

One key takeaway from U.S. involvement in Colombia was the use of Special Operations Forces. USSOF have not only been able to advise and train Colombian forces, but because of the relationships they have with elements such as the embassy and USAID, they can rapidly leverage other elements of national power when needed as the situation changes. One could argue that more forces are required to cover a greater portion of the country, but SOF's limited involvement has proven this is not true. SOF's investment in Colombian civil affairs and psychological operations units has clearly been a good investment, as now these units can go out and engage with the Colombian population and civil society without having to rely on their U.S. counterparts.

U.S. economic and financial aid has also made a significant difference in the trajectory of Colombia. It appears that financial aid, when coupled with the appropriate amount of military assistance can be effective in resolving stability issues in a country. Colombia's intelligence capabilities have most likely continued to mature as the country's security forces grow in their ability to now export security outside of their own country.⁹⁴

⁹² Burton, *Colombia*.

⁹³ Burton, *Colombia*.

⁹⁴ Jon Eijking, "When the Technical is Political: Colombia's Export of Security Expertise," *The Oxford University Politics Blog*, December 2, 2019, <https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/when-the-technical-is-political-colombias-export-of-security-expertise/>.

This case has also shown that security does not always have to come from military forces, and police forces often have a significant role to play in improving conditions. While U.S. forces have engaged with police forces on a large scale in the past, such as in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, it appears that for Colombia, limited engagement with the police has supported additional efforts to engage with military forces to improve the whole security situation.

While security will always need to be addressed, a balanced approach is key. Colombia has consistently conducted high value targeting over the years to eliminate insurgent leaders, but this has proven to be ineffective when conducted alone according to Moyer et al. in *Persistent engagement in Colombia*.⁹⁵ They argue that Colombia did not have enough forces to effectively counter the insurgent problem. Looking back over the evidence from this case, I assess that it was the coagulation of compounding affects across DIMEFIL that created conditions for a more stable Colombia:

- Integrated personnel at the U.S. Embassy from SOF and other agencies that could consistently collaborate and coordinate operations.
- A limited but purposeful U.S. military presence, with clear objectives.
- A robust economic package that complimented military efforts by bolstering the Colombian economy and providing alternatives to becoming involved with the FARC or other malign organizations.
- Using intelligence to support operations and not simply drive high value targeting of insurgent leadership.
- Leveraging competent police forces when available to contribute to security efforts.

This lends itself to believe that there must be another way to contribute to security, while improving conditions in stability with limited resources. In the current post-FARC

⁹⁵ Moyer, Pagan, and Griego, *Persistent engagement in Colombia*, 59.

peace deal area, splinter groups and factions have rose to the top to continue the revolution against the Colombian government.⁹⁶ The future of the peace deal remains uncertain, but undoubtedly Colombia's capacity and capability to contend with future instability has been forever improved due to the assistance it has received from the U.S.

E. FINDINGS

Clearly, the USG has made consistent and consequential investments into the future of Colombia across the DIMEFIL spectrum. These investments have added up and allowed Colombia to become a South American success story over the last decade, gaining much attention on the world stage after the culmination of peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC.⁹⁷ Importantly, the investments the U.S. has made in terms of troops and forces has been relatively small, and USSOF has maintained a small footprint in Colombia for decades. Every case is different, but several lessons emerge from this case that apply to the current and future security environment.

It is likely that the U.S. will continue to develop its relationship with Colombia well into the future, and only time will tell how much involvement from SOF will be required. One thing Colombia has shown is how intricately linked the civil environment is to the security environment, and that both must be assessed and engaged with concertedly. The advent of technology, information warfare, and changing economic landscape will only intensify the need for the U.S. to assess and engage the civil environment in Colombia and other areas into the future. For the next case study, the Greek Civil War, research addresses an instance where lethality was necessary and adequate in defeating an insurgency.

⁹⁶ Sasha Ingber, "Former FARC Leaders Announce 'New Stage Of Fighting,' Upending Colombia's Peace Deal," *National Public Radio*, August 29, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/29/755425619/former-farc-leaders-announce-new-stage-of-fighting-upending-colombia-s-peace-dea>

⁹⁷ BBC, "Colombia signs new peace deal with Farc," *BBC News*, November 24, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-38096179>

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V. CASE STUDY #2: GREEK CIVIL WAR, 1945–1949

A. INTRODUCTION

The Greek Civil War of 1945–1949 provides an example of how conventional forces, military advising, and economic assistance can prove useful in shaping the outcome of a conflict. This was a case with little interaction between U.S. military advisors and the Greek population. Engagements of American military advisors primarily focused on engaging their Greek military counterparts. The U.S. State Department focused on engaging the Greek government, and coupled with U.S. military assistance, proved to be an effective whole-of-government approach. One of the key strategic mishaps of the Greek insurgents, who were backed by the Soviets, was transitioning from a guerrilla war to conventional war too early and attempting to fight a force that was well backed with conventional military assistance. This case shows that placing an emphasis on the population and engaging in the civil domain is not always necessary. Sometimes brute force, dollars, and guns is a winning strategy.

Understanding the changes in strategies and approaches in this key case could give insights to how USSOCOM can identify the correct approach at the ideal time. This case also helps identify how a primary conventional military assistance mission affected the outcome of this conflict, as the U.S. continues to grow its SFAB capability. Perhaps SOF are not always required, and possibly there is a cost trade off difference associated when going with a lower-cost footprint such as SOF vice versa a larger more robust footprint as conventional forces. This case shows a relatively small U.S. conventional footprint that accompanied military and economic funding assistance. The Greek Civil War was one of America's forays into irregular warfare in the 20th century and shaped the development of doctrine, training, and equipment following the resolution of the conflict.⁹⁸ American military advisors in Greece advised the Greek army in its employment of WWII tactics of combined arms maneuver, close air support, and mobility; reinforcing their hypothesis that

⁹⁸ Larry Cable, *Conflict of Myths : the Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (New York University Press, 1986).

this was the most efficient way of war, regardless of the type of warfare an adversary may seek to employ, setting the stage for the eventual challenges of Vietnam.

B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE

As World War II was winding down, and German forces had been entrenched in Greece, the *Ellinikós Laikós Apeleftherotikós Stratós* (ELAS), which stands for the National People's Liberation Army, started an insurgency to expel the Axis invaders and eventually overthrow the existing Greek government.⁹⁹ As the Germans were pushed out and the Allies moved in, primarily the British, the *Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas* (KKE) began to gain control over territory with plans to overthrow the existing Greek government.¹⁰⁰ This uprising was backed by Joseph Stalin as he pledged military and economic support to the pro-communist insurgents, hoping to help spread the ideology of communism in to a new state.¹⁰¹ With the Allies primarily focused on ending the war, not much support was available immediately to help the Greek government overcome the insurgents. However, as WWII ended and the Axis powers surrendered, support began flowing into Greece.¹⁰² The UK and U.S. both recognized the threat that the Soviet Union and communism posed to Western Europe and pledged support to the pro-west Greek government. Throughout 1946 and into 1947, the insurgents focused on a guerrilla war, relying on safe havens across the border in the neighboring countries of Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria.¹⁰³

American intervention started in 1947 when President Truman approached Congress with a plan to provide \$300 million in aid to Greece. Support continued to grow with the creation of Joint U.S. Military Advisory and Planning Group (JUSMAPG) which oversaw U.S. military advising in Greece. In early 1948 General James Van Fleet was named commander of the JUSMAPG and dispatched to take command of the advising

⁹⁹ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Cable, 9–10.

¹⁰¹ Cable, 11.

¹⁰² Cable, 10.

¹⁰³ Cable, 10.

mission.¹⁰⁴ The goal of JUSMAPG was to enable American advisors to control the waging of the war against the guerrillas.¹⁰⁵ Over the course of 1947 to 1948, the insurgents effectively disrupted Greek National Army (GNA) operations. After JUSMAPG was established and began advising, American advisors helped shape the organization and training of GNA to resemble a more conventional modern force for that time because that is what they knew how to do extremely well, having just fought in WWII. JUSMAPG advised the Greeks to move away from special units and focus on developing their standing army to be numerically and tactically superior in terms of personnel and firepower.¹⁰⁶ This worked out to the GNA's advantage as the insurgents began a shift away from waging guerrilla warfare and began meeting the GNA in open engagements, which ultimately led to their defeat. The insurgents simply could not overpower the GNA with their significant backing from the U.S. To add to this point, in 1949 Tito and Stalin diverged in aligned interests, which resulted in the insurgents losing support from Yugoslavia, forcing the insurgents to mainly operate in the mountainous regions of southern Albania. While the complicated position of the insurgents having to rely on safe havens across the border was not critical to their defeat, the introduction of air power and targeting of supply and infiltration routes that insurgents had been using for most of the war enabled a decisive end to insurgents' ability to gain momentum in the later years of the civil war. The massing of firepower both air and artillery coupled with employment of methodical clearing of insurgent strongholds brought about a decisive end to the war. U.S. advisors learned that their approach of overwhelming military assistance that was developed up to that point from the American experience in WWII, was successful at a relatively low cost which will be elaborated further in the case study analysis.

C. CASE STUDY EVALUATION

Analysis for this case will focus on attempting to identify what key factors across the DIMEFIL spectrum led to the eventual defeat of the communist insurgents, principally

¹⁰⁴ Cable, 14–15.

¹⁰⁵ Cable, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Cable, 15, 17–18.

from the viewpoint of American support and American investments. Additionally, analysis will focus on how and if any engagement within the civil domain occurred and to what extent it impacted the trajectory of the conflict. Perspectives will be given on how the insurgents conversely operated within the civil domain and assessments will be made to determine to what extent this helped or hurt their cause.

1. Diplomatic

Once the Americans intervened, one of the challenges of a high level of financial military support was creating a sense of limitless support from the USG and American people due to the strategic geopolitical context of the American entrance into the civil war:

First is the issue of leverage. Since the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the United States put the Greek Civil War in terms of being part of a greater East-West conflict. The Greeks perceived that the United States was fully committed to winning the war. Therefore, the Greeks believed that the U.S. would provide ever-increasing funds or would send American combat troops to Greece if the rebels appeared to be close to final victory. Greek soldiers, from the lowest to highest rank, did not feel the need to be aggressive.¹⁰⁷

Essentially by pledging their support, the Americans may have counterintuitively conveyed a sense of safety to the Greeks, that they would have come to their aid no matter how dire the situation became. Conversely, one could argue that this actually reinforced the American position and demonstrated a high amount of resolve to reassure its ally that they were committed to supporting the Greek government. Government competence is also key, as the Americans learned while advising the Greeks that if they did not enable good governance on part of the Greeks, the population would turn to the insurgents for the governance needs.¹⁰⁸

Since by this point, modern USSOF had not quite fully come to fruition, it is hard to evaluate how SOF would have impacted the mission in Greece. One could speculate that

¹⁰⁷ Frank Abbott, "The Greek Civil War, 1947 - 1949: Lessons for the Operational Artist in Foreign Internal Defense," (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, 1994), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a284240.pdf> 38.

¹⁰⁸ Abbott, 40.

USSOF would have contributed greatly to the mission, with a focused training plan to increase special capabilities in GNA forces, and tying well with diplomatic efforts. Yet, it is unclear to what extent coordination of State Department initiatives were synchronized with U.S. military assistance initiatives, and if Van Fleet simply had “carte blanche” authorization to do what it took to enable the GNA to root out the insurgents. In the diplomatic realm, it is hard to discern how much more coordination would have gained the net sum for the American interest in Greece. Perhaps coordination was in fact excellent, due to the limited military presence, and limitations on using only advisors instead of deploying operational units such as infantry and other maneuver elements.

2. Information

The information campaign that the Greek government pursued could be characterized as coercive, persuasive, and legalistic. The Greek government used psychological operations to put pressure on insurgents and erode its support from the public. Aircraft were used before ground operations to drop leaflets targeting Greek People’s Liberation Army or DAS fighters to surrender.¹⁰⁹ These leaflets were followed up with offers of amnesty extended to the DAS.¹¹⁰ Despite well documented use of psychological operations in WWII, these leaflet drops signified USG early attempts at PSYOPs in limited wars such as this one. Coupled with police forces crackdown on KKE and DAS sympathizers, the Government’s campaign of repeatedly and publicly condemning the DAS created an effective information campaign that eroded the KKE’s legitimacy over time. There is a significant difference between creating campaigns when a whole nation is the enemy as was the case with Nazi Germany, versus a resistance movement that has sprung up in occupied territory that receives sympathy from a significant amount of the population as in Greece.

¹⁰⁹ Norman J. Brozenick, “Small Wars, Big Stakes: Coercion, Persuasion, and Airpower in Counterrevolutionary War,” (Master’s Thesis, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 2012). <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA391656>.

¹¹⁰ Brozenick, 62.

3. Military

What makes this case different than other cases presented in this thesis is how heavily American investments in the GNA contributed to the defeat of the communist insurgent group. American investment came primarily in the form of military aid, material, and advising that shaped how the GNA organized and began fighting back against the insurgents.

JUSMAPG faced numerous challenges in advising the GNA which lacked established doctrine and force organization comparable to that of a modern force of that time. Cable describes the American experience in Greece in summation, “JUSMAPG saw the Greek Civil War to be simply a war and, like any war, amenable to simple direct military resolution.”¹¹¹ The GNA primarily consisted of 3 Field Divisions, 4 Mountain Divisions, and a special operations type unit called the LOK, or Lochoi Oreinōn Katadromōn meaning mountain raiding company.¹¹² The Americans focused on limiting the missions of the LOK, a British trained special operations unit, to raiding and deep reconnaissance missions as they were an effective force in the conflict and GNA commanders would rather employ a force that achieved results than their less trained GNA counterparts.¹¹³ This was the challenge JUSMAPG faced, how to effectively train up the GNA to a capable level to begin effectively challenging the DAS in the countryside, which could be done quickly.

Airpower and artillery played a significant role as well in the evolution of the conflict and ultimate defeat of the DAS. Over time, the buildup of fires capabilities in the GNA enabled them to support ground forces with effective fire power to the point where the DAS simply could not overcome this advantage. As the conflict progressed, GNA units became more effective and systematic in the employment of their forces because of American advising, which created opportunities for successful operations penetrating deep into DAS controlled territory of the mountainous regions of Northern Greece. Successful

¹¹¹ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 15.

¹¹² Cable, 18.

¹¹³ Cable, 19.

sweeps of DAS strongholds forced the DAS to recoup and regenerate forces in their safe havens in bordering countries, which created the time and space for the Greek government to establish legitimate governance in previously DAS controlled areas.

4. Economic

The Greek Civil War provided an early opportunity for the U.S. to execute the Truman Doctrine, which pledged \$300 - \$400 million in economic and military support to Greece as they fought the ELAS in the civil war.¹¹⁴ According to a 1947 report to Congress, the economic package sent to Greece in 1947 totaled \$146,500,000 in July of that year which was then reduced to \$123,500,000 in December, denoting a significant shift in the overall package to presumably increase military assistance.¹¹⁵ With this economic assistance, the American mission to Greece advised the Greek government in the allocation of funds which “assisted in improvements in the internal distribution of supplies and, through its advice and guidance, has stimulated progress in fiscal, budgetary, and organizational reforms within the. Government”.¹¹⁶ This report to Congress illustrated the changing security conditions in Greece due to the increasing capabilities of the insurgents and recommended to bolster military support in the campaign.

5. Financial

Before evaluating the financial element of Greece, it is important to note that this case study took place before modern financial systems were developed. Financial intelligence was relatively low, albeit Greek government programs sought to decrease financial support for the resistance from populace sympathizers but tracking such support during these times would have been difficult. Had modern threat finance intelligence and other financial practices existed at the time, and if SOF were integrated into such

¹¹⁴ The amount of economic and military assistance varies by source as to the actual amount sent to Greece annually. Some sources such as *Conflict of Myths* list it as \$300 million while other sources list the aid package at \$400 million such as *Public Law 8075 - Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, Pub. L. No. 75, volume 80, 1-4 (1947), <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/public-law-80-75-assistance-greece-and-turkey>. What is important is that numbers were significant at that time.

¹¹⁵ *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, for the Period Ended December 31, 1947. Congressional Document, 8.

¹¹⁶ *Second Report to Congress on Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 11.

operations, SOF could have helped identify financial information to help separate the populace from the insurgents, deny insurgent funding, and target suspected insurgent leaders through financial transactions.

Greece was in a tough spot financially following WWII as it entered the civil war. From the previously referenced report to congress, it shows that financial assistance and advising focused on assisting the Greeks overcome high inflation and develop an internal budget.¹¹⁷ The goal of this research was not to identify specific financial situations that were dealt with American and foreign support. More so, this research suggests that often in cases such as these a wholistic approach is optimal, and that military assistance alone was not the only factor in contributing to a success in supporting the Greek government. Also particular to this case was how it appears after research that military advisors primarily focused on advising their military counterparts, and economic and diplomatic assistance was primarily provided via the State department and the U.S. diplomatic mission to Greece. This shows a significant difference in how the U.S. and particularly SOF has acted in recent conflicts to attempt to work closely with other U.S. agencies to best allocate resources such as economic and development assistance to areas that most need it in developing countries.

6. Intelligence

Intelligence efforts of the U.S., the Greek government, and GNA were not made clear in this research. The insurgents were identified as having a significant and robust intelligence network of approximately 15,000 active and 750,00 passive supporters in the form of the *Yiafka*, the DAS intelligence and collection cells that were operating throughout the country.¹¹⁸ From the outset, the insurgents appeared to hold an intelligence advantage that the GNA and government would have to overcome either through the buildup of forces and firepower or other means such as winning over the population. American military assistance most likely enabled the GNA to develop its forces to the point where the insurgent intelligence advantage was no longer valid as they simply could not overcome

¹¹⁷ *Second Report to Congress*, 13.

¹¹⁸ Cable, *Conflict of Myths*, 17.

the GNA's growing force and firepower advantages. As the GNA and police forces began working together, they were able to begin isolating insurgent support zones by arresting suspected Yiafka members to deny insurgent pre-battle intelligence and prevent them from avoiding surprise GNA attacks.¹¹⁹

7. Law Enforcement

The Greek government made an effective use of its law and law enforcement capabilities to support the overall effort to defeat the DAS. Military assistance from the U.S. was very explicit and laid out through research, however it is unclear if any elements of the U.S. military or other agencies engaged with any Greek law enforcement. Suspected KKE would be arrested before GNA operations.¹²⁰ The Greek government by the end of the war had arrested thousands of Greeks who were charged with subversion.¹²¹ It appears this strategy helped the GNA separate and isolate insurgent support from the rest of the population as it conducted sweeping operations towards the north.

D. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The U.S. made consistent investments over time in the form of the military advisor and material assistance, and economic support that it provided to the Greek government. The GNA was able to develop to the point where they could begin pushing north in sweeping operations to clear insurgent strongholds, thanks in part to JUSMAPG's advising efforts. Airpower and artillery support proved to be critical as GNA forces pushed further north in the later parts of the war. Timing also played a key role in the success of the GNA. The communist leadership pushed heavily on Markos, commander of the DAS, to transition to a conventional fight and meet the GNA forces in open battle towards the end of the conflict that played right into the hand of the GNA and JUSMAPG. Had Markos chosen to maintain a guerrilla warfare strategy, as he assessed would be most effective

¹¹⁹ Brozenick, "Small Wars, Big Mistakes," 55.

¹²⁰ Brozenick, 56.

¹²¹ Brozenick, 56.

until the Greek governments resolve was weak enough, this could have changed the course of the war.

Failures always exist in every conflict, as the nature of warfare is variable and never the same. JUSMAPG believed the solution to the conflict was developing the capabilities of the GNA, creating a modern conventional fighting force capable of waging an effective counterinsurgency campaign against the insurgents. The USG made a significant fiscal expenditure in supporting the Greek government, of nearly \$1 Billion, of which a majority went to properly arming the GNA. The ultimate failure in this case for the Americans was learning that overwhelming firepower and a well-equipped and well-trained army can defeat an insurgency under any conditions and making an assumption that numerical superiority will always win. The U.S. would later find this assumption is not always accurate, as was the case in future conflicts such as Vietnam. Specifically, the Viet Cong, with the support of the North Vietnamese Army, effectively held out long enough for U.S. support to leave, allowing them to achieve their political ends. Also, the Greek dependency on American economic aid and military support is evident. Without such support, one could see an alternate outcome where the communists would have overthrown the nationalist government and installed a pro-communist government that would have aligned with the USSR. The Greek government along with its U.S. advisors placed a high premium on military support which dismissed any concerns of the population and established a theory of victory that crushing the insurgency with overwhelming firepower was inevitable with time. While this approach is feasible for a short campaign such as this one, other cases such as Afghanistan has shown that overwhelming military capabilities cannot always win the conflict. The social, cultural, and political dynamics of a conflict must be understood holistically to determine the optimal blend of civil and military capabilities across the DIMEFIL spectrum for any theory of victory for conflicts of the future. While this case can be viewed from many perspectives, the assistance provided by the U.S. undoubtedly contributed to overall mission success. However, this case is the exception and not the rule, as the U.S. would later learn in Vietnam.

E. FINDINGS

The most significant investment the U.S. made in this conflict was in the form of economic and military aid. The military advisor package was relatively small when compared to other conflicts, coming off the heels of WWII and prior to the significant contributions and sacrifices made in the Korean War. Given these investments, the U.S. made good use of its advantages—financial support with its strong economy, the new resolve at home to prevent the spread of communism, and the employment of military advisors and material from its conventional arsenal that was still at its prime following WWII.

Assumptions could be made as to the overall effectiveness of the aid packages, but ultimately the communist insurgency was defeated, and America achieved its strategic political goal. What is not evident in this case is how the civil domain was engaged. It appears that in this case overwhelming military support, training, and fire power in the form of air support and artillery provided a significant advantage that overpowered the capabilities of the insurgents. The Greek government was able to leverage the growing military capabilities of its military force, while diminishing the intelligence capabilities of the Yiafka that provided significant support to the DAS, accompanied by legal capabilities to isolate insurgents from the populace. Along with economic and development assistance aimed at improving the economic situation, the Greek government along with its support from both the U.S. mission to Greece and JUSMAPG, were able to increase the legitimacy of the Greek government which in the long term enabled the defeat of the insurgents. In this case, outside support mattered. The Truman Doctrine provided a way to bolster the capacity of the Greek government militarily and economically, which far surpassed the limited support the insurgents received from neighboring countries and the USSR. What can be pulled from this case is that in certain instances, especially when the geopolitical situation includes a broader context for how the conflict is to be viewed on the global stage, that outside support can make the difference of success or failure of a government that is embroiled in a conflict. The next case study, U.S. intervention in the Philippines, will evaluate how U.S. assistance helped Philippine efforts to defeat an insurgency.

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VI. CASE STUDY #3: THE PHILIPPINES, 2001–2020

A. INTRODUCTION

Following 9/11 attacks, President George Bush declared the war on terror.¹²² That War declaration kickstarted a series of events that included deployment of SOF to the Philippines to participate in a Foreign Internal Defense (FID) mission to counter the growing threat of the terrorist group known as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).¹²³ U.S. assistance to the Philippines initially surged to 1,300 troops in 2002, with a consistent presence in later years of 500–600 troops.¹²⁴ The Philippines is a successful case of Foreign Internal Defense (FID) due to U.S. intervention.

The case of USSOF assistance in the Philippines was chosen due to the diverse nature of SOF missions that were executed throughout the campaign. SOF missions included operational level planning assistance, civil military operations (CMO), intelligence support operations, police special action forces (SAF) training, and training support to the Philippines Joint Special Operations Group (JSOG).¹²⁵ Special operations training notwithstanding, engagement in the Philippines focused on specific elements of the civil environment with the overall goal of reducing terrorist strength and influence. Additionally, in their study, *U.S. Special Operations in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, RAND identifies three data points that were tracked and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of U.S. operations in reducing terrorism: number of enemy initiated attacks, number of ASG militants and polls measuring support for ASG among the populace. In each of these metrics, RAND found an overall reduction over time, leading to the conclusion that USSOF

¹²² “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” *The White House: President George W. Bush Archives*, September 20, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

¹²³ Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1236/RAND_RR1236.pdf), xiii.

¹²⁴ Robinson et al., xv.

¹²⁵ Robinson et al., xiv.

intervention in the Philippines reduced violence and reduced the spread of violent extremism.¹²⁶

B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE

During the 1990s, as Al Qaida began to develop into a persistent threat to the U.S., it also inspired other radical Islamic groups to take action and fight for the radical view of Islamic life. As ASG grew in the Philippines, it began to receive support and funding from Osama Bin Laden, surging to over 2,000 members in the year 2000, conducting 36 attacks in 1995 and 29 attacks in 1999.¹²⁷ While senior U.S. officials only started to take interest in the ASG until pre and post 9/11 attacks, 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group which is forward based in Okinawa, Japan took notice early on.¹²⁸ Then as ASG began kidnapping Americans, U.S. interest escalated.¹²⁹ According to Rand, in September of 2000 after the activity levels began being noticed by more senior members of the USG, and planning team was dispatched to meet with the Philippines government and military:

In September 2000, a USPACOM planning team led by ADM Dennis C. Blair with members of SOCPAC, the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) to the Republic of the Philippines, and the 1st SFG (Airborne) met with Philippine military and government officials in Manila to begin planning for an extensive mobile training team mission under Title 22 Chapter 22 (Mutual Security Assistance) authorities to organize, train, and equip this new force for the AFP that would be called the LRC.¹³⁰

1st SFG initially deployed to the Philippines in March 2001 to train the Philippine Light Reaction Company (LRC) into a counter terrorism capability.¹³¹ Although actions by the ASG prompted U.S. intervention, what USSOF found after arrival in country was a diverse group of threats, each posing differing and complex challenges to the overall security

¹²⁶ Robinson et al., xviii.

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of State, 2001 in Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 11.

¹²⁸ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 12.

¹²⁹ CNN, “Timeline: Hostage Crisis in the Philippines,” *CNN*, August 25, 2002, <https://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/06/07/phil.timeline.hostage/>.

¹³⁰ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 14.

¹³¹ Robinson et al., 14.

situation in the Philippines. Other threat groups included the communist insurgency New People's Army (NPA) which was active throughout the country, an Islamic separatist group known as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Over time, U.S. advisors saw threats change with the MILF splinter group known as Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Moreover, after the emergence of ISIL in 2014, groups such as ASG and BIFF both pledged fealty to Islamic State of Levant (ISIL), although no direct connections between the groups have been established.¹³² Despite proposals to increase troop presence in the Philippines and take a more direct approach to solving the terrorism problem in the Philippines, SOF again proposed taking a long-term investment strategy towards the Philippines so as not to enlarge pre-existing anti-American predispositions in the Philippines. Due to Philippines' sensitivities from the U.S.'s long history of involvement in the Philippines to include long standing support of the Marcos dictatorship, U.S. forces to include USSOF were given very strict rules of engagement (ROE) and forced to conduct all operations with a Philippine partner.¹³³ While it is unclear if the long-term investment strategy will pay off, the Philippines seems to have increased their security capabilities post-U.S. intervention, which will be highlighted in this case study evaluation.

C. CASE STUDY EVALUATION

U.S. military operations in the Philippines from 2001–2020 is a classic case of FID and serves as a benchmark for engagement with countries dealing with transnational security threats. It is important to identify a distinction in this case between FID and security cooperation. FID is the “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization, to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism, and other threats to their security.”¹³⁴ FID can include indirect support such as military exchange programs, military exercises, and building infrastructure to support

¹³² Robinson et al., 104

¹³³ Robinson et al., 23.

¹³⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Foreign Internal Defense*, JP 322 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010), https://permanent.fdlp.gov/gpo29282/jp3_22.pdf, ix.

defense goals.¹³⁵ FID can also include direct support which includes, “civil-military operations (CMO) (primarily the provision of services to the local populace), psychological operations (PSYOP), communications and intelligence cooperation, mobility, and logistic support.”¹³⁶ Security cooperation on the other hand focuses on DOD interactions with foreign defense institutions to promote U.S. interests, while building partner capabilities and developing relationships for contingency operations.¹³⁷ U.S. assistance in the Philippines focused on FID, by providing direct support to Philippine forces via operational assistance to forces engaged in combat, and CMO and Information Operations (IO) support.¹³⁸ U.S. forces in the Philippines truly worked by, with, and through their Philippine counterparts to defeat insurgent forces and create a safer Philippines nation, while maintaining a relatively low force number. Due to a low force number, USSOF in the Philippines were forced to rely on other entities to leverage other instruments of DIMEFIL outside of security and focus military engagements on building the capability of their Philippine counterparts. Such operations would not have been as effective if not for careful coordination with other agencies across the USG, and the use of creative solutions that engaged multiple arms of DIMEFIL in a concerted manner to defeat complex problem sets such as ASG. This case is evaluated using the DIMEFIL model, looking at how SOF integrated into each element of national power, while leveraging the civil domain during operations.

1. Diplomatic

Integration with the State department was critical to Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines’s (JSOTF-P) success in the Philippines. On top of using the Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF), USSOF helped develop the Mindanao working group which brought together all elements of the U.S. country team in the Philippines.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, x.

¹³⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, x.

¹³⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, x.

¹³⁸ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, xxvii.

¹³⁹ Department of State, “ICAF: Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework,” (Washington, D.C.: Department of State), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/187786.pdf>.

This working group created the Mindanao Engagement Strategy which detailed JSOTF-P's support of State department initiatives.¹⁴⁰ This coordination enabled the eventual removal of Abu Solaiman, an ASG leader, in a subsequent operation that will be discussed further in later sections.¹⁴¹

2. Information

Upon reviewing the information instrument for the case of the Philippines, not a lot of detail was found as to actual operations and their effects. Generalizations of operations were available, and IO was often discussed as being fully integrated into military operations; with little distinction between SOF IO operations and other actors including other elements of USG. SOF's principal information action arms operating in the Philippines during this time were PSYOPs teams. PSYOPs are a tactical level unit that focuses on direct messaging the population via a variety of media and mediums. PSYOPs teams (formerly known as MIST or military information support teams), worked in a variety of manners to compliment interagency efforts, as well as support Philippine government governance: "Military information support teams (MISTs) provided a range of services aimed at improving the target population's perceptions of the GRP's legitimacy and building support for the rule of law."¹⁴²

PSYOPs teams handed out leaflets that supported the mission to identify and eventually kill ASG leader Abu Solaiman in 2007.¹⁴³ Presumably, each of these efforts were coordinated through the State Department through the Mindanao working group mentioned earlier, as no evidence was found to state otherwise.

3. Military

U.S. military investments in the Philippines 2001–2014 were limited to a small command and control structure, Joint Task Force 510, which controlled all U.S. military

¹⁴⁰ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 81.

¹⁴¹ Robinson et al., 55.

¹⁴² Robinson et al., 30.

¹⁴³ Robinson et al., 55.

operations in the Philippines. Of the 1,300 forces initially allowed to enter the Philippines, only 600 personnel were allowed to deploy to the southern regions where insurgent activity was most prevalent due to a force cap imposed by the Philippine government.¹⁴⁴ Between 2009 and 2015, the USG spent between \$11 million dollars and \$27 million dollars in foreign military financing.¹⁴⁵ Joint Special Operations Task Force, referred to as JSOTF-P, commanded and controlled all USSOF in the Philippines. JSOTF-P support to the Philippines operated and advised at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels in advising Philippine security forces. At the tactical level, USSOF has trained multiple elements up to a high degree of proficiency thanks to slow and steady gains by Philippine SOF.¹⁴⁶ Operational level advising focused on working with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to refine their planning procedures, command and control functions, and better integrate intelligence into their operations process.¹⁴⁷ While these two levels worked together to increase capabilities of the AFP, USSOF also worked with AFP to develop institutional improvements to their force structures that included developing strategy and coordination at the AFP national headquarters, and created a Philippine SOF pipeline that became a “self-sustaining SOF enterprise.”¹⁴⁸ These improvements over time enabled AFP to grow its ability to conduct effective military operations as they pursued the various insurgent groups operating throughout the southern areas of the Philippines.

CMO provides a unique capability to the joint force commander during any operation;, that often combines military engagement and security with development and other programs across the DIMEFIL spectrum. Often, these operations include collaboration with outside entities such as the U.S. State Department and USAID, in addition to sometimes working with non-governmental organizations whose agendas align with CMO projects and U.S. interests. CMO made up a significant component of U.S.

¹⁴⁴ Robinson et al., 28.

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Military Financing Accounting Summary.”

¹⁴⁶ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson et al., xxi.

¹⁴⁸ Robinson et al., xxi.

engagement in the Philippines.¹⁴⁹ According to JP 357, CMO can be defined as, “Civil-Military Operations (CMO). CMO are the activities performed by military forces to establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relationships between military forces and indigenous populations and institutions (IPI).”¹⁵⁰ CMO enabled U.S. forces to identify population needs and problems and address them through appropriate programs, while at the same time improving receptiveness of the population to the Philippines government. U.S. CA forces came in to provide medical or veterinary support and infrastructure projects such as health facilities and schools to the population in contested areas. This effort helped Philippines forces begin to deny insurgents support from the population. These operations also fostered improved relationships between Philippine forces and the populace, making it easier for Philippine forces to pursue insurgent forces.¹⁵¹ CMO is not always applicable to an operation but provides a useful engagement strategy that is best leveraged when other elements of DIMEFIL are incorporated to achieve synergistic effects.

4. Economic

Since 2001, economic aid has played a significant part in the U.S.’s balanced approach to the Philippines. The economic challenges faced by the Philippines have been complex. While fighting an insurgency over the last two decades, the Philippines has contended with natural disasters such as typhoons, and in 2020, COVID-19. These additional challenges placed economic strain on the Philippines, that if not addressed, could have pushed more of the population towards the growing insurgency, even as they attempt to establish legitimacy through populace support. USAID has historically provided more than \$100 million dollars in economic aid to the Philippines annually since 2010. Economic aid reached nearly \$176 million dollars in 2020 alone, most likely due to the effects of COVID-19 and Typhoon Goni both of which had significant impacts on the country.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Robinson et al., 29.

¹⁵⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Civil-Military Operations*, JP 357 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_57.pdf, vii.

¹⁵¹ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 29.

¹⁵² U.S. Agency for International Aid, “U.S. Foreign Aid by Country,” *USAID*, https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/PHL?fiscal_year=2020&implementing_agency_id=1&measure=Obligations

Looking at the GCI, the Philippines hit a low in 2009 with an overall score of 3.90.¹⁵³ Since 2010, the Philippines GCI score rose incrementally every year, up to 4.36 in 2016, placing the Philippines in 67th place when compared competitively to other countries in the world according to World Bank and World Economic Forum.¹⁵⁴ Despite early SOF operations not tapping fully into expertise held by U.S. Embassy personnel, eventually JSOTF-P CMO and IO supported the Philippines government in projecting legitimacy to affected populations, while decreasing popular support of the insurgency with State Department and USAID programs, USG:

Nonetheless, CA activities did secure tactical access and population sentiment in both Basilan and Jolo, which can contribute to strategic objectives. For example, during Operation Ultimatum in 2006, despite AFP reluctance to enter the area between Jolo City and the MNLF camp, JSOTF-P CA enlisted the support of the mayor to conduct MEDCAPs, VETCAPs, and dental civic action programs.¹⁵⁵

These programs were eventually emulated throughout other areas of operations in the country.¹⁵⁶ These activities provided opportunities for access to the population, which in turn generated actionable information, and denied ASG access to the population over time.¹⁵⁷

5. Finance

Terrorism and insurgencies alike require funding to enable operations and to impose cost on the government which insurgents or terrorists seek to attack. Banaloi asserts that the ASG is a, “hybrid violent group that arguably falls under the complex nexus of

¹⁵³ The World Bank, “Global Competitive Index,” *The World Bank*, https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h93b3b7a4?country=PHL&indicator=631&viz=line_chart&years=2007,2017.

¹⁵⁴ The World Bank, “Global Competitive Index,” *The World Bank*, https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h93b3b7a4?country=PHL&indicator=631&viz=line_chart&years=2007,2017 World Economic Forum, “Competitiveness Rankings,” *World Economic Forum*, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-report-2015-2016/competitiveness-rankings/>

¹⁵⁵ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 88–89.

¹⁵⁶ Robinson et al., 89.

¹⁵⁷ Robinson et al., 91.

crime and terrorism.”¹⁵⁸ Throughout the conflict in the Philippines, the U.S. Treasury has designated leadership from ASG as terrorists, which enables a freezing of any U.S. connected assets, such as Jainal Antel Sali Jr., Radulan Sahiron, and Isnilon Totoni Hapilon in a 2005 sanction.¹⁵⁹ In addition to U.S. sanctions, often the Philippine government has supported financial targeting efforts by establishing rewards for information leading to the capture of individuals with established links to groups such as ASG. In the case of Sali, Sahiron, and Hapilon, the Philippine government announced a 5,000,000 reward for information leading to their capture.¹⁶⁰ The U.S. has also used rewards to generate incentives in the Philippines population to generate information leading to the capture of high-level terrorists. The USG offered rewards of \$5,000,000 for information leading to the capture of Abu Sabaya and Abu Solaiman who were both high level ASG members.¹⁶¹ Financial resources can support other elements of DIMEFIL by either constraining resources available to threat actors, or by offering incentives to the population to encourage conversations with host nation or coalition/U.S. forces.

6. Intelligence

Intelligence was identified as a significant weakness of the Philippine forces prior to U.S. involvement.¹⁶² AFP also lacked precision strike capabilities and effective air ground coordination, both necessary to use intelligence generated from the operational environment and impose cost on insurgent forces.¹⁶³ U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) provided intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to support Philippine forces as they developed each of these capabilities.¹⁶⁴ To integrate intelligence activities

¹⁵⁸ Rommel C. Banlaoi, “Duterte’s Challenges: Terror, Crime and the Abu Sayyaf,” *Rappler*, May 13, 2016, <https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/duterte-challenges-terror-crime-abu-sayyaf>.

¹⁵⁹ Department of Treasury, “Abu Sayyaf Senior Leaders Designated,” *Department of Treasury Press Center*, November 30, 2005, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/2005113013165523877.aspx>

¹⁶⁰ Department of Treasury.

¹⁶¹ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*.

¹⁶² Robinson et al., 26.

¹⁶³ Robinson et al., xvi.

¹⁶⁴ Robinson et al., 26.

into operations more effectively, the U.S. advising team helped the AFP develop Philippine led operations and intelligence fusion teams at varying levels and echelons of command, which helped integrate intelligence in the AFP operation cycle. Additionally, \$1.2 million dollars of military assistance were spent funding a 60-person intelligence fusion center for the Philippines Southern Command Headquarters (SOUTHCOMHQ) which had control of five operational brigades (BDE) in the southern parts of the country, where most of the insurgent activity was concentrated.¹⁶⁵ Over time, intelligence capabilities of AFP improved, and the AFP began capitalizing on opportunities while synchronizing their own elements of DIMEFIL. In the case of Abu Solaiman, after the \$5,000,000 reward was put out to the media, a low-level insurgent's wife convinced her husband to turn on the ASG, thanks in part to their recent atrocities against Muslims that IO units were able to publicize. Philippine intelligence turned the informant and were able to develop the current whereabouts of Abu Solaiman. After receiving the tip on his whereabouts, AFP mounted an assault resulting in the eventual death of Abu Solaiman and two other ASG members.¹⁶⁶ The operation highlighted the effectiveness of coordination across agencies both from the U.S. and Philippines thanks to, "effective fusion of intelligence and operations and efforts by law enforcement and the U.S. State Department that yielded the critical intelligence on Abu Solaiman's location."¹⁶⁷ Operations like these show that when certain elements of national power are brought together in an optimal way, success is achievable.

7. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement represents one the greatest risks posed to security in the Philippines. The Philippine National Police (PNP) is the main policing force in the Philippines and is made up of twelve operational components that each deal with a different aspect of securing the Philippines.¹⁶⁸ Despite these capabilities, the PNP unsuccessfully dealt with the budding insurgency problem in the late 1990s, which paved the way for AFP

¹⁶⁵ Robinson et al., 39.

¹⁶⁶ Robinson et al., 55.

¹⁶⁷ Robinson et al., 55.

¹⁶⁸ The Government of the Philippines, "The Philippine National Police," *Official Gazette*, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/featured/about-the-pnp/>.

and U.S. intervention, due to a lack of training and competency. Even as late as 2016, the capability of the PNP to secure the interior of the Philippines has been called into question.¹⁶⁹ Rivalries also challenged interoperability and positive relationships between police and military forces.¹⁷⁰ USSOF advised mostly the PNP component SAF which is responsible for, “civil disturbance control, internal security operations, hostage-taking rescue operations, search and rescue in times of natural calamities, disasters and national emergencies, and other special police operations such as anti-hijacking, anti-terrorism, explosives and ordnance disposal.”¹⁷¹ Despite extensive training, 44 PNP SAF members were killed after being ambushed by MILF forces, an Islamic separatist group, in January 2015. While SOF trained with some elements of Philippine law enforcement at times, the most value came from working with the legal attaché (LEGAT) at the embassy who is a U.S. Department of Justice representative.¹⁷² David Kris, a Legal Attaché who served in the Philippines, summarizes how law enforcement was used effectively in supporting whole-of-government operations to defeat ASG and other groups in, “Law Enforcement as a Counter-Terrorism Tool”.¹⁷³ Kris acknowledges the challenges of working with Law Enforcement, and also recognizes the value of using the right tool for the right job: “We should continue to use all of the military, law enforcement, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic tools at our disposal, selecting in each case the particular tool that is most effective under the circumstances, consistent with our laws and values.”¹⁷⁴ This approach and the others used in this case are discussed in the case study analysis.

¹⁶⁹ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*.

¹⁷⁰ Robinson et al., 86.

¹⁷¹ The Government of the Philippines, “The Philippine National Police.”

¹⁷² David Maxwell in Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 58.

¹⁷³ David Kris, “Law Enforcement as a Counterterrorism Tool,” *Journal of National Security Law & Policy* 5 (1): 1–95, June 15, 2011), https://jnslp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/01_David-Kris.pdf

¹⁷⁴ Kris, 2.

D. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Overall, the Philippines has turned into a FID success story and may serve as a model for effective U.S. intervention through careful advisement of indigenous forces to help them solve their own internal security issues. Repeatedly, in each instance where operations significantly improved the situation in the Philippines, a multi-element use of the DIMEFIL approach was found to be evident. USSOF essentially built an operating concept that enabled access to insurgent support areas through effective CMO activities such as humanitarian assistance projects. Once access was built, PSYOPs and other elements of SOF were able to deliver pro-government and anti-insurgent messaging while alerting Philippine citizens of programs which could help lead to the capture of insurgent leaders through monetary rewards. These programs enabled Philippine forces to impose cost on insurgent groups as insurgent leadership targeted degraded insurgent operations. As AFP slowly entered insurgent areas and their military operations became more effective over time, insurgents lost popular support and slowly became more fractionalized.

No approach to any security problem will ever be perfect. In light of these successes, there were a few failures. The PNP lacked the capacity and training to secure their own country effectively, which forced the AFP to deal with security issues. Often, threat groups had ties that created endemic security challenges, and some elements of USSOF believe that the security situation as a whole could have been dealt with more systematically.¹⁷⁵ Despite many instances of effective U.S. interagency collaboration cited in this case, some elements of the USG described challenges which arose at times, such as failures by JSOTF-P personnel to routinely lean on U.S. embassy expertise.¹⁷⁶ One way these shortcomings were mitigated was through the placement of a USAID liaison officer at JSOTF-P that, “increased collaboration in later years to reduce redundancy, increase effectiveness, and provide USAID a secure location in Mindanao.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Robinson et al., *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*, 67.

¹⁷⁶ Robinson et al., 130.

¹⁷⁷ Robinson et al., 130.

E. FINDINGS

The U.S. made smart investments over the course of its engagement in the Philippines. Economic assistance enabled the Philippine economy to improve, offering alternatives to insurgent recruitment. USSOF helped improve the capacity of AFP and other entities such as PNP to develop their own institutional capacity to train and develop their own forces. When compared to other cases, the Philippines offers a model that slow and steady investment with a balanced approach to DIMEFIL, over a long-term time horizon can generate results.

Overall, the case of U.S. intervention in the Philippines provides useful insights into how USSOF can integrate all elements of the DIMEFIL model into its operations, while leveraging elements of the civil domain to achieve overarching U.S. strategic objectives. Every USG agency operating in the Philippines during this time contributed to the mission of supporting the Philippine government to defeat each of the security threats posed to it by insurgent groups. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, U.S. forces were set to be removed from the Philippines due to changes in the political situation of the Philippines. The country's current president, Rodrigo Duterte, froze the agreement that would have seen the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Philippines in 2020.¹⁷⁸ The changing political leanings undoubtedly can affect the trajectory of a security situation for a country, and only time will tell what U.S.-Philippine cooperation will look like in the future. For the next case, "Russian Annexation of Crimea in 2014," research will look at how one of the U.S. competitors, Russia, balanced its use of SOF across instruments of national power while operating significantly in the civil domain to achieve a political agenda.

¹⁷⁸ Ben Werner, "Philippines Freezes U.S. Pull-out From Visiting U.S. Forces Agreement," *USNI News*, June 8th, 2020, <https://news.usni.org/2020/06/08/philippines-freezes-pull-out-from-visiting-u-s-forces-agreement>

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VII. CASE STUDY #4: RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA IN 2014

A. INTRODUCTION

When Crimean separatists began demonstrations in 2014, they shifted the trajectory of Crimea and Ukraine towards a war that few saw coming. After losing control of their proxies in the separatist state and realizing that Ukraine was unwilling to make political concessions despite the growing challenges to its sovereignty in the Crimean Peninsula, Russian oligarchs recognized that direct action was necessary to achieve their political goals.¹⁷⁹ The Crimean issue continues to be a part of the conversation on the international stage. This case study will be slightly different than other cases in this thesis, as it evaluates the use of DIMEFIL and engagement within the civil domain *from the perspective of the Russian Federation*. This unique approach may offer insights from another perspective and identify which investments have and have not paid off in accomplishing its strategic goals. This also presents an opportunity to refrain from mirror imaging, by identifying what methods the Russians implemented to achieve its political agenda.

By studying cases from a competitor's perspective, USSOCOM has an opportunity to learn relevant insights into not only how to compete with that state in a future contested environment by learning from their past actions, but can also identify new ways and methods to engage in the civil domain. Ukraine represents not only a case that showed Russia's true colors and its commitment to achieving political goals up to and beyond the use of force, but it also highlights the friction created when two great powers rub against each other in their periphery. Ukraine represents an economic, political, and geographic buffer that Russia wishes to maintain influence over as the strength and reach of NATO continues to expand in the west. In this case, not only will the Russian perspective be evaluated, but insights can also be gained from the limited involvement the U.S. has invested in the space. This case brings into question many themes brought up from previous cases: appropriate levels of troops, to include SOF; merging of civil and military

¹⁷⁹ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*.

capabilities; and creating leverage through other elements of the DIMEFIL model. All of these themes will be explored to assess what proved to be effective in the contested space of Crimea.

B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE

The case of Crimea presents opportunities to evaluate many manners of military action on part of both the Russians and the Ukrainians. However, discussion in this thesis is limited to Russian SOF's roles and actions that occurred in the civil domain that directly affected military operations and objectives. The 2017 RAND study, *Lessons from Russian Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* was primarily used to gain an understanding of what actually happened and identify relevant observations.¹⁸⁰ At the outset, it appeared that Russian forces were not numerically superior to the Ukrainian forces stationed in the Crimean Peninsula at the time, which best estimates put at 15–18k.¹⁸¹ The first event in a series of developments occurred on February 24th when “the city council in Sevastopol installed a Russian citizen as mayor, and several units from the 810th Naval Infantry arrived in the city square in armored personnel carriers (APCs).”¹⁸² Russia knew there was a threshold of armed conflict it wanted to stay under and played a different game; using its *Komandovanie sil spetsial'nalnykh operatsii* (KSO) unit which is Russia's equivalent of SOF, it posed as a “local ‘self-defense militia’ [that] seized the Crimean Parliament and raised a Russian flag over the building.”¹⁸³ While it is not likely the leadership of Crimea coordinated with Russian leadership, the political upheaval in Crimea certainly gave Russia time to begin maneuvering its forces throughout the peninsula and gain strategic advantages.¹⁸⁴ This is a clear case of how events in the civil domain can have a significant impact on the outcomes of other domains, in this case, the employment of Russian forces.

¹⁸⁰ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*.

¹⁸¹ Kofman et al.

¹⁸² Kofman et al.

¹⁸³ Euromaidan PR, “Ukraine War: Russian Special Forces Seize Parliament Building in Crimea Ukraine,” August 16, 2014, in Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*.

¹⁸⁴ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 10

Leveraging the diplomatic element of national power to use deception, again, allowed the Russians to establish local militia, organized by Russian intelligence operatives, while Russian Airborne troops donned Crimean police uniforms to further add to the fog of conflict.¹⁸⁵ By March 26th, 2014, a referendum was passed, and Russia effectively seized control of Crimea with little to no resistance from Ukraine and no direct casualties.¹⁸⁶ What happened in Ukraine provides a playbook for how Russia alternated between direct and indirect means to achieve its political agenda. Russia used its SOF and intelligence operatives to set conditions for its conventional forces by engaging in the civil domain and taking advantage of the weak Ukrainian government presence by influencing Crimea to push for annexation.

C. CASE STUDY EVALUATION

The case of Russia's operations surrounding its annexation of Crimea can provide useful insights into how a state can leverage multiple elements of DIMEFIL in only a matter of months. Russia's use of elements of DIMEFIL had its fair share of risks and opportunities of which some paid off and some did not. Overall, from the Russian perspective, the case was a success as it supported its political goals of splintering Ukraine and created favorable conditions in Ukraine for follow on operations such as in Donbas and Donetesk. Russia gained a new port to expand its Anti-access/aerial denial (A2AD) bubble and project combat power in the Black Sea region.¹⁸⁷ Analysis presented in this particular case is scoped to operations specifically in Crimea conducted by Russia between February and April of 2014. Russia's use of its SOF, intelligence apparatus, and its conventional forces to engage elements of the civil domain across DIMEFIL show successes and failures derived from the campaign.

¹⁸⁵ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Kofman et al., 11.

¹⁸⁷ Kakhabe Esebua, "Russian Build-up on the Black Sea and Recommendations for U.S.-NATO Counter-Strategy," (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/52978/17Mar_Esebua_Kakhabe.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

1. Diplomatic

For Russia, popular support back home appeared to be important when deciding how and when to employ forces, and the eventual annexation of Crimea:

The annexation of Crimea, which sent Putin's approval ratings into the 80 percent range for a remarkable four years, may be why people say there is public approval for aggressive Russian foreign policy. The annexation created a "collective euphoria" that "led to an emotional outpouring of pride, hope and trust in Russia's leaders."¹⁸⁸

It is unclear if annexation was the end goal for Russia or if it was to simply create political discord for Ukraine by supporting Crimean separatists in breaking away from Ukraine.¹⁸⁹ Diplomatically, it is unclear what if any diplomatic assets or resources were leveraged by Russia to annex Crimea specifically in the Crimean Peninsula, as most of its operations that were assessed for this thesis fell into the Information, Military, and other categorical elements of DIMEFIL.

2. Information

Russia began its information campaign a day prior to Russian takeover of government buildings in Crimea.¹⁹⁰ This shows the potential of timing an information campaign with military activities aimed at focusing effects in support of one clear objective, the annexation of Crimea. While Russia's agenda was clear, the effects of its information warfare campaign and psychological operations were not. Russia assumed that a critical vulnerability of the Ukrainian forces in Crimea was their corruptibility and low morale. Despite this, most Ukrainian forces did not surrender, and some units were even able to escape with equipment such as aircraft back into Ukraine proper.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Timothy Frey, "Russians supported Putin's moves in Crimea in 2014. Here's what's different this time," *Washington Post*, April 12, 2021, ProQuest.

¹⁸⁹ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 27.

¹⁹⁰ Kofman et al., 13.

¹⁹¹ Kofman et al., 27.

3. Military

Military action is often the easiest to characterize, with large troop deployments, observable naval fleet maneuvers, and even aircraft sorties. While Russia certainly employed conventional forces in a military action as a part of its campaign to annex Crimea, Russia also subtly employed and counted on its SOF to carry out some of its more brutal actions. A well-orchestrated Russian deception campaign, or *Maskirovka*, meaning mask or concealment, was key to all of Russian attempts in the seizing of Crimea which enabled Russia to confuse Ukrainian decision makers and delay the Ukrainian response.¹⁹² This deception was pulled off by executing a series of snap exercises across Russia, ordered by Putin, which drew attention away from Crimea and enabled Russian SOF and other similar capabilities to begin setting conditions to control the populace and enable a swift occupation through its SOF and Airborne forces in Crimea to favor succession and annexation.¹⁹³

4. Economic

The economic approach Russia took towards Crimea is not apparent. No clear approaches were identified in research for how Russia used economic power to affect the outcome in Crimea. What has been evident in years past though, is how Russia continues to invest in Crimea to bolster its economy, with annual investments fluctuating between \$1 and \$2.7 billion.¹⁹⁴ Russia's annexation of Crimea negatively affected the Crimea economy, forcing most goods to be imported from Russia at a high price.¹⁹⁵

5. Financial

From the lens of finance, no clear actions were evident that occurred which gave Russia a more advantageous position as its forces infiltrated Crimea in the spring of 2014.

¹⁹² Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 23.

¹⁹³ Kofman et al., 24.

¹⁹⁴ Barclay Ballard, "Crimea doesn't pay: assessing the economic impact of Russia's annexation," *World Finance: The Voice of the Market*, October 28, 2019, <https://www.worldfinance.com/special-reports/crimea-doesnt-pay-assessing-the-economic-impact-of-russias-annexation>.

¹⁹⁵ Ballard, "Crimea doesn't pay: assessing the economic impact of Russia's annexation."

Since 2014 a variety of sanctions have been imposed on Russia, and Crimea since its annexation, that probably have affected the financial situation in Crimea, and impacting the people of Crimea.¹⁹⁶

6. Intelligence

Russia used the significant advantages it had as it enabled the annexation of Crimea. As Russian intelligence operatives worked in Crimea, by sharing language and having similar cultures, this potentially enabled Russia to gain intelligence advantages and make incentivizing local citizens of Crimea to work for Russian intelligence more likely.¹⁹⁷ Often, it can be hard to differentiate between simply Russian military intelligence service, or *Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye* (GRU), operations and Russian intelligence operations, given the diverse intelligence capabilities Russia possesses. It has been established, however, that elements of the GRU were directly involved in the conflict in Crimea. Several senior GRU officers, led by Igor Girkin, commanded the rebel forces and served as political advisers to the Russian leaders of the “people’s republic.” As in Crimea, the GRU seems to be President Vladimir Putin’s weapon of choice in expanding Russian power outside of Russia and into the territories of the successor states of the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁸

Specifics of Russian intelligence operations in Crimea were largely unavailable in open sources; therefore, it is hard to gauge the extent and impact of intelligence activities on Russian operations in the peninsula. Russia undoubtedly planned intelligence activities throughout the civil domain in Crimea, which to some extent supported its overarching political agenda of the ultimate annexation of Crimea. Perhaps, the success of Russian intelligence operations can be measured by the extent to which all of their activities in the

¹⁹⁶ Quantifying the net effect of sanctions particularly as it relates to military effects and political goals is hard to quantify. To see current sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation and Crimea, look at: Department of State, “Ukraine and Russia Sanctions,” *Department of State Economic Sanctions Policy and Implementation*, <https://www.state.gov/ukraine-and-russia-sanctions/>.

¹⁹⁷ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia’s Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 17.

¹⁹⁸ “Ukrainian Crisis.” In *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Intelligence*, edited by Robert W. Pringle. 2nd ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, (2015), http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Frowmanrasi%2Fukrainian_crisis%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D901

peninsula were not uncovered by the West. Conceptualized this way, Russian intelligence operations were well synchronized and supported overarching Russian political agendas.

7. Law Enforcement

Russia potentially recognized the importance of law enforcement activities and their ability to control the populace and took action to control policing activity throughout the annexation of Crimea. Russia developed local militias as previously mentioned, and had some troops wear local police uniforms to give the appearance Crimea was still under control by the local government.¹⁹⁹ This probably was more feasible for Russian forces instead of another country due to the shared common language and culture of Russians with Crimeans, as previously established. Ukraine also created several opportunities for Russia to take advantage of leading up to Russia's infiltration and annexation.

The second error occurred on February 24, when Igor Mosiichuk, a leader of Right Sector, a far-right political party and paramilitary group in Ukraine, publicly threatened to bring paramilitary fighters to Crimea. Russian-language media used Mosiichuk's statements to convey a sense of imminent danger for those living in Crimea. Crimean Berkut riot-police officers, reinforced with Kuban Cossacks, who reside in parts of Russia near the Black Sea, set up checkpoints under the guise of responding to a potential right-wing threat. Clashes between Crimean Tatars and Russian nationalists, protests for secession from Ukraine, and counter-protests for unity ensued, leading to a general state of chaos and disorganization, which facilitated Russia's take over.²⁰⁰

Ukraine made further mistakes by failing to grasp the strategic atmosphere around its law enforcement entities in the Crimean Peninsula:

The third error occurred on February 25, when Ukraine's minister of interior disbanded the Crimean Berkut riot-police returning to Sevastopol after suppressing protests in Kyiv. Specifically, the central government first sent the unit back to Crimea and then disbanded it. This was a humiliation for the security forces, which believed they were carrying out their duties as ordered and forced them to search for new employment. Upon their return to Sevastopol, these units were greeted as heroes by the people and issued Russian passports by Moscow. They defected to the Russian side and

¹⁹⁹ Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 10.

²⁰⁰ Michael Kofman et al., 21.

provided auxiliary units in early operations, when Russia was short on manpower.²⁰¹

Russia's recognition of the importance of law enforcement and its ability to contribute to its ability to project force and control the population gave it a strategic advantage that only complemented other operations that were occurring simultaneously across the spectrum of DIMEFIL in Crimea.

D. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Russia's successes in Crimea give insights into how USG and USSOCOM could potentially leverage civil and military capabilities in a combined manner to achieve political ends. Russia utilized its SOF to focus on setting conditions within the population and creating the ability to affect political change by taking charge of the police. Russia used its SOF to make it seem as if the Crimean people were asking for Russia to come in and restore order after Ukraine disbanded its police force and changed political regimes. Russia focused on taking advantage of its shared culture and language with Crimeans to enable intelligence and military backed policing operations. Once conditions were set in Crimea, Russia entered with a sizeable force to gain control and deter further aggression from Ukraine to retake the peninsula. Overall, Russia executed the operation by taking advantage of opportunities it was poised to seize once Ukraine began military and political missteps, showing the detail of Russian contingency operation planning and synchronization of DIMEFIL efforts.

Russia made its fair share of mistakes in infiltrating Crimea. It remains unclear if Russia ultimately planned to annex Crimea, or if they simply wanted to create political havoc for Ukraine due to its growing connection with the West. Pushing for annexation certainly came at a higher cost for Russia, forcing them to deploy troops and actively take control of the peninsula. The extent to which most Crimeans wanted Russia to reclaim Crimea is uncertain, but there were certainly documented sentiments among the population who aligned with a pro-Russia agenda. If pushed to occupy a region where they did not share language and cultural similarities with a pre-existing support base as the case here, it

²⁰¹ Kofman et al., 21.

is uncertain if the same strategies and tactics Russia used would have been successful. Russia assumed a significant operational vulnerability in the Ukrainian forces stationed in Ukraine and may have expected more defections from Ukrainian forces than how many occurred.²⁰² Russia did seem to care more about the popularity of its Crimean campaign at home than whether the local political leaders were cooperative with the new pro-Russia agenda.²⁰³

E. FINDINGS

Perhaps Russia's greatest investment in Crimea is its continued financial and economic support it provides yearly to Crimea; as it took control of the peninsula, it took responsibility for the economic conditions in the country. Central to the success of this campaign Russia orchestrated was its low cost in terms of violence and military assets. Russia used a blend of intelligence, SOF, and conventional forces with support of a robust information warfare campaign to achieve its political agenda. Russia limited the number of troops it used to affect the annexation and instead focused on strategic positioning of its forces, the use of deception, and the blending of military and civilian operations into a cohesive campaign that resulted in no direct casualties and was accomplished in two months.

Russia's campaign to create political havoc for Ukraine and the ultimate annexation of Crimea provides lessons in combining elements of DIMEFIL to achieve a political end. Russia maintains certain advantages over other more democratic states such as the U.S. Russia possesses the ability to create a singular narrative that is propagated by the state and the oligarchy. It can simultaneously leverage its military and intelligence assets in a manner it sees fit with little oversight from concerned parties. Russia's use of deception was an integral part of this operation and most likely will continue to be a trend. This case brings up the question of how much deception is ideal and necessary when executing military operations within the civil domain. The use of deception in Crimea overall proved effective as Russia strategically positioned its forces in preparation for action in the peninsula.

²⁰² Kofman et al., 26.

²⁰³ Kofman et al., 27.

However, deception use long term can have unintended consequences and can sow distrust with civil partners in an operating environment. Russia assumed that risk and mitigated it by employing forces that shared cultural and language similarities as the region it was occupying. The U.S. will most likely not find itself in a similar position in the future. It may be useful to consider how deception can be used in limited instances to confuse and delay adversarial decision making, especially if that deception occurs in the civil domain where the U.S. has historically engaged on a limited basis in past operations as this thesis has attempted to establish. Looking back at the American experience, the next case, American intervention in “Afghanistan,” will highlight how an over dependence on lethality can complicate the overall strategic situation in conflict.

VIII. CASE STUDY #5: AFGHANISTAN, 2001–2020

A. INTRODUCTION

In this final case study, I argue that an over reliance on the military instrument of national power in Afghanistan resulted in the U.S. failing to achieve victory. Whether it be the plethora of precision drone strikes, repeated SOF direct action raids, or simply the oversaturation of counter insurgent forces in the form of troops from NATO nations that make up the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), all of it was too much. The SOCOM's strategy in Afghanistan over relies on precision lethal targeting. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism found that the U.S. DOD conducted an estimated 1071 aircraft or drone strikes in 2016, and an estimated 2607–2609 strikes in 2017.²⁰⁴ These high volumes of strikes represent only one way the USSOCOM, and the U.S. military at large over relied on lethality to achieve victory in Afghanistan.

U.S. involvement in Afghanistan also represents an opportunity to examine a country that has historically been caught in the middle of great power competition, as it sits in the periphery of the Russian Federation. Russia invaded Afghanistan in 1979, which provided an opportunity for the U.S. to chip away at Soviet influence as it fought its way through the Hindu Kush, only to foreshadow America's similar experience in Afghanistan a mere 20 years later. Additionally, the U.S. has conducted every phase of an operation based on the model found in Joint Publication 30 "Phasing an Operation Based on Predominant Military Activities," being involved from Russian intervention during the 1980s through its current limited involvement at the time of this writing.²⁰⁵ This range of activities provides much to examine with regard to the civil domain, military action, and

²⁰⁴ 2017 Data: Jack Serle, and Jessica Purkiss, "Afghanistan: Reported U.S. Air and Drone Strikes 2017," *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/get-the-data-a-list-of-us-air-and-drone-strikes-afghanistan-2017>; 2016 Data: Jack Serle, Payenda Sarganda, and Jessica Purkiss, "Afghanistan: Reported U.S. Air and Drone Strikes 2016," *Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/get-the-data-a-list-of-us-air-and-drone-strikes-afghanistan-2016>.

²⁰⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, V-13.

how the U.S. has and has not leveraged other elements of DIMEFIL to achieve its objectives.

One of the more challenging aspects of Afghanistan for the U.S. is the difference in culture and structures throughout the operational environment. This makes both working with Afghans to help them secure their own country and achieving U.S. objectives a pressing challenge.²⁰⁶ The Pashtuns ethnic group, which almost exclusively makes up the Taliban, represents 42% of Afghanistan's total population, with the remainder being made up of ethnicities of Uzbeks, Hazaras, Baloch, Turkmen, and Tajiks.²⁰⁷ Each of these tribes changes the dynamics of an effective engagement strategy across the DIMEFIL spectrum. When dealing with Pashtun tribes, American forces have had to grapple with the simple yet complex nature of their tribal law, known as *Pashtunwali*.²⁰⁸ The tribal code of Pashtunwali, that could be coined, "law for the lawless," creates customary law that rejects the notion of the state.²⁰⁹ These varying cultural dynamics create challenges for the USG in the application of force, and other elements of DIMEFIL, such as the development of a national government aimed at providing security for the entire nation.

Afghanistan also provides a comparison for other conflicts due to the high troop presence, surging to over 110,000 troops in 2011 before tapering down to 8,600 troops in 2020.²¹⁰ It is unclear SOF deployed over the course of the war. Most likely, the amount of SOF deployed to Afghanistan throughout the war varied and remained relatively low in

²⁰⁶ Adriana Zobrist Galád. "The Challenges and Role of Structures in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan." *Connections. The Quarterly Journal (English Ed.)* (11 (2): 5–36, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.11.2.02>.

²⁰⁷ G Parthasarahty, "Challenges in Afghanistan," *The Tribune India*, December 15, 2020, <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/challenges-in-afghanistan-155896>.

²⁰⁸ Barkhat Shah Kakar, "The Popular Misconceptions about Pashtunwali," *Takatoo* (Issue 7, Vol. 4, January-June 2012,) <http://www.uob.edu.pk/journals/takatoo/Volumes/English-Jan-Jun-2012.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Bruce L. Benson, Zafar R. Siddiqui, "Pashtunwali—Law for the lawless, defense for the stateless," *International Review of Law and Economics* (Volume 37, 2014) 108–120, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irle.2013.07.008>.

²¹⁰ For 2011 troop levels: BBC News. "Afghanistan war: What has the conflict cost the US?" For 2020 troop levels: Kathy Gannon, "Number of American troops in Afghanistan drops to 8,600 as Taliban make big changes ahead of expected talks," *Military Times*, July 19, 2020 <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/07/19/number-of-american-troops-in-afghanistan-drops-to-8600-as-taliban-make-big-changes-ahead-of-expected-talks/>.

contrast to all of the U.S. military's presence.²¹¹ When compared to other case studies presented in this thesis, a stark contrast in numbers of troops is evident. Afghanistan has also had considerable involvement from USSOCOM and other NATO SOF partners who have invested heavily to change systemic problems in the country related to Afghan SOF capabilities and capacity. As effective as SOF may have been up to this point in improving the capacity of Afghan SOF as well as other initiatives such as the Village Stability Operations model, no strategic end-state in Afghanistan currently exists.²¹²

B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CASE

The U.S. has been involved in Afghanistan since the 1980s, when Russia moved into Afghanistan to support the installment of a pro-communist regime.²¹³ During the 1990s, the U.S. had limited involvement until September 11th, 2001 when the Al-Qaida leader Osama Bin Laden planned a terrorist attack on the United States from the mountains of Afghanistan. This attack on the United States hurled the U.S. into Afghanistan to remove the ruling political party, the Taliban, and hunt down the man responsible for the 9/11 attacks. While the Taliban was no match for the combined military might of the U.S. and its allies that support the war effort, the situation in Afghanistan quickly changed from a limited duration high intensity conflict to an unlimited duration low intensity counterinsurgency that would continue for the next 20 years. The U.S. achieved its initial goal of hunting down Osama Bin Laden in 2011 when he was killed during an operation to find him after a series of intelligence breakthroughs. It was revealed he had been hiding for several years in a discrete compound near Abbottabad, Pakistan. With each new U.S. presidential administration, objectives, end states, and strategy has changed significantly,

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212 Mark L. Brown, "Village Stability Operations: An Historical Perspective From Vietnam to Afghanistan," *Small Wars Journal*, March 28, 2013, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/village-stability-operations-an-historical-perspective-from-vietnam-to-afghanistan> Village Stability Operations was an initiative started in 2009 by members of 7th Special Forces Group to begin changing the operating environment at the local level. By approaching the problem set with a tribal focus and brokering relationships with each "village" SOF was embedded in, the goal was to create a sustainable security initiative.

213 Olga Oliker, *Building Afghanistan's Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience* (Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation, 2011) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1078a.9>.

which is often the challenge with democratic nations that elect new political leaders every term.

C. CASE STUDY EVALUATION

There is no shortage in literature available about the American approach to “win the war” in Afghanistan and successfully transition responsibility for the country over to a national government that was backed by the people of Afghanistan. Given the robust scholarship in this area, the scope of this analysis follows the format presented early on in this research. Specifically, this analysis focuses on identifying how SOF has engaged in the civil domain of Afghanistan while attempting to combine elements of DIMEFIL, and the degree to which this engagement did or did not contribute to U.S. progress in Afghanistan and its status today.

1. Diplomatic

Diplomacy in a highly fractionalized and tribal country like Afghanistan with a weak central government is a tricky thing. It is not as simple as in other countries where the U.S. engages at the diplomatic level where discussing policy and partnerships creates meaningful progress, especially as history has shown “Strong centralization of power in Kabul creates a backlash against any government there, as it ignores the historic ability of the people to govern themselves.”²¹⁴ Despite the challenges of using diplomacy in a place like Afghanistan, the State department has invested heavily there, and often SOF has been the tip of the spear to facilitate interagency coordination and collaboration to achieve multi-polar objectives. This coordination and investment from the State department often occurred at the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), which was a whole-of-government concept and approach to solving problems in Afghanistan.²¹⁵ U.S. State Department personnel surged to 600 personnel supporting PRTs across Afghanistan in 2007, on top of

²¹⁴ Thomas Barfield, edited by Hy Rothstein, and John Arquilla, “Afghan Paradoxes,” in *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America’s Longest War* (Baltimore: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 54.

²¹⁵ Department of State, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs),” *U.S. Department of State Archive*, August 1, 2007, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/91433.htm>

nearly \$5 billion in foreign aid provided in that year alone. Those 600 personnel supported 25 PRTs across Afghanistan, which was the State Department's leading effort in its investment of resources and personnel in Afghanistan.²¹⁶ Most diplomatic efforts focused on improving the provincial level of governance through the action arm of these PRTs; however it is unclear from research to what extent SOF supported these PRTs, as from a command and control perspective most PRTs were supported and responsible to each of the regional commands, of which there were a total of four according to a NATO report from 2007.²¹⁷ Most likely, due to the command and control of SOF units falling under Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) control, interaction and coordination between SOF and PRTs may have varied widely. As most SOF were focused on the tribal level, with State Department focused on the provincial level, a disparity emerged in diplomatic efforts. A provincial governor in Afghanistan may be fully supported by the government of Afghanistan; but this did not necessarily mean that the people or tribes of an area submitted to such authority. Often, local tribal leaders, commonly referred to as warlords due to their adherence to the code of Pashtunwali, were the leaders engaged with by SOF. This created a complex dichotomy in differing engagement strategies between SOF engagement and other stakeholder engagements, such as State Department, and other non-SOF elements of ISAF. SOF continually identified tribal leaders throughout Afghanistan because they were often in more austere locations away from the PRT locations. While sometimes efforts at the provincial level complemented engagements at the tribal level by other Unified Action Partners (UAP), both efforts were holistically disparate with sometimes competing agendas, as SOF sought out partners who could act immediately because they wielded real power, while PRTs worked the long game, helping provincial Afghan leaders build legitimacy over time.

²¹⁶ NATO, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan- how they arrived and where they are going," *NATO Review* (Autumn 2007), <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/issue3/english/art2.html#:~:text=How%20many%20are%20there%3F,Which%20countries%20lead%20them%3F>

²¹⁷ NATO, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan- how they arrived and where they are going."

2. Information

Information operations in Afghanistan presented quite the challenge for American policy makers; as the old saying goes “Any press is good press.” Prior to the arrival of General Petraeus as head U.S. Commander of all forces in Afghanistan in 2010, when the U.S. would counter Taliban propaganda and condemn any sort of Taliban attack against Afghanistan civilians, the result would unintentionally perpetuate the Taliban story of the Afghanistan government’s and International Security Assistance Force’s inability to secure the population.²¹⁸ This is a self-defeating cycle that the U.S. cannot win. After taking command, Petraeus shifted information operations policy to focus on dramatizing victims of Taliban attacks, showing the effects of Talibanization on Afghan and Pashtun culture, and bringing to light Taliban genocides of Shi’a Hizara, a smaller ethnic group in Afghanistan.²¹⁹ In a 2010 RAND study, Arturo Munoz discusses the challenges of PSYOPs effectiveness in Afghanistan, citing a variety of media and products disseminated throughout the first ten years of the Afghanistan War.²²⁰ In his closing thoughts, Munoz brings up valid points that show a lack of coordination between IO, PSYOPs, Public Affairs (PA) and other elements of USSOF operating in Afghanistan. Munoz concludes that up to 2010, U.S. IO in Afghanistan had poor delivery, was clumsy, failed to seek local opinions, and was often unsophisticated in assuming the people of Afghanistan are simple.²²¹ These challenges do not make crafting an effective IO campaign any easier, as recurring themes that air strikes, civilian casualties and night raids created antipathy among the Pashtun populace were continually perpetuated.²²²

²¹⁸ Robert Reilly edited by Hy Rothstein, and John Arquilla, “Shaping Strategic Communication,” in *Afghan Endgames: Strategy and Policy Choices for America’s Longest War* (Baltimore: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 186.

²¹⁹ Reilly, “Shaping Strategic Communication,” in *Afghan Endgames*, 186.

²²⁰ Arturo Munoz, *U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan: Effectiveness of Psychological Operations 2001–2010*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012.
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1060.html>.

²²¹ Munoz, 146.

²²² Munoz, 26.

Another key challenge to information dominance in Afghanistan is the competing agendas of information functions across SOF, conventional forces, and each of the different government agencies operating in the country. In previous cases, information operations across U.S. agencies were often synchronized and supported one another. However, in Afghanistan, due to either the increased troop presence, or complex nature of the country, information operations were often disparate. Once again, this is a significant drawback of a large presence and high troop numbers. Due to the scale of the operation and commitment of resources from both SOF, conventional forces and the State department each stakeholder is presenting their narrative that their information officer or psychological operations operator is recommending to that commander or director. In the information environment, there are numerous specialties and capabilities that form the information arm of any unit: Information Operations, Psychological Operations, Civil Affairs and Public Affairs, not to mention every soldier from every other military occupational specialty that may be operating in a given area and engaging with someone from the operational environment on any given day.

What potentially exacerbates this problem of multiple sources of information with an unclear overall information strategy is the tribal nature of Afghanistan. In his report, Munoz also found that IO officers working in Afghanistan repeatedly commented on the necessity to ensure IO messaging reflected the target audience, and was not simply a mirror image of U.S. perceptions of the Afghan people.²²³ Munoz also emphasized the importance of finding local voices and key communicators that could communicate the message to the relevant population.²²⁴ Perhaps if more resources were devoted to identifying key communicators and understanding the audience, IO could have been more effective in Afghanistan.

3. Military

Numbers for SOF deployed to Afghanistan were not available for this research, but assumptions can be made that SOF presence in Afghanistan was significantly less than the

²²³ Munoz, 19–20.

²²⁴ Munoz, xix-xx.

rest of U.S. forces. With nearly 110,000 troops including SOF at the height of the Afghanistan war in 2011, the military component made up the largest contribution to the effort, but this does not answer the question of how much return on investment the USG received after investing so heavily for many years. In FY 2016, Afghanistan received \$751 million dollars in DOS/DOD security assistance funding.²²⁵ That is just one year of support.

The cultural complexities of Afghanistan once again pose challenges to American efforts. In their chapter “Security and Peacebuilding” found in *Integrated Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Transforming Conflict*, Feigenbaum, Goldberg, and Vence-Cheng describe the challenge to security enhancing operations holistically:

For one, various armed groups including Al-Qaida, the Taliban, and the Hizb-i-Islami destabilize the Afghani government and undermine the SSR (Security Sector Reform) process. Similarly, the culture of warlordism resists regional government rule, and the pervasive narcotics trade exacerbates insecurity and instability (Sedra, 2004). Furthermore, the coalition’s lack of cultural understanding cripples essential elements of SSR, including the creation of a strong and functioning national army and police force, and of accountable and transparent defense and judicial ministries. A cultural specificity the coalition ignored in the initial SSR strategy in Afghanistan was the attention to ethnic demographics within the army, police, and defense ministry.²²⁶

While it certainly is difficult for conventional forces to effectively train all of its members on language and cultural dynamics that may arise when executing a broad mission such as Afghanistan, one would hope that SOF would be up for the challenge. Operating in the civil domain inherently requires cultural intelligence and acuity, yet even members of SF have argued that the existing amount of cultural training SF receives is not enough.²²⁷ This begs the question: how do you create security in a place like Afghanistan

²²⁵ Epstein, *U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview and Funding*, 6.

²²⁶ Sam Fegenbaum, Rachel Goldberg, and Rhea Vance-Cheng, Craig Zelizer, ed. “Security and Peacebuilding,” in *Integrated Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Transforming Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 212.

²²⁷ Joshua L. Hill, “U.S. Special Forces: Culture Warriors,” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/44580/14Dec_Hill_Joshua.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

where each tribe controls small chunks of the countryside, there is no national allegiance, and ethnic differences create competing agendas?

4. Economic

Assessing the economic impacts in a country that does not use modern economic and business practices creates issues with research. For example, indexes such as the Global Competitive Index used for previous case studies is not available for Afghanistan. However, what is established is how much economic aid the USG has sent to Afghanistan historically. There was limited information available that detailed SOF's involvement in economic development in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has received \$500 million dollars in economic aid annually since FY2018, with the request for FY2020 coming in at \$400 million dollars. Programs supported by economic assistance included rule of law improvement programs, infrastructure projects, democracy and governance assistance, education programs, health facilities, and agricultural programs.²²⁸ This information does not give a clear insight into the effectiveness and tangible results of economic and development programs in Afghanistan.

One initiative that leveraged economic development in support overarching USG strategic goals was Task Force Business for Stability Operations (TFBSO) which was originally implemented in Iraq, and then expanded into Afghanistan in 2009.²²⁹ TFBSO focused on three lines of effort: extractives, investment, and indigenous industries. This cross-collaboration between DOD and USAID disbursed nearly \$1.5 billion dollars during the programs lifetime in terms of economic development support to Afghan industries from 2011–2013.²³⁰ Although this initiative seemed to be a step in the right direction, engaging

²²⁸ Curt, Tarnoff, "Afghanistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," CRS Report No. R40699 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20100812_R40699_083410a3b45e984d9ee24287e133f21065132166.pdf

²²⁹ S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Daniel Egel, and Ilana Blum. *Task Force for Business and Stability Operations: Lessons from Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7249/j.ctt19w737n>. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1243/RAND_RR1243.pdf, 16.

²³⁰ Zimmerman, Egel, and Blum, 42.

a large variety of stakeholders (DOD, USAID, State department, and Afghan businesses) was ultimately unsuccessful due to policy resistance from within the USG:

Several respondents expressed the feeling that it was this inability to gain buy-in for TFBSO in Washington, rather than operational successes or failures, that ultimately led to the organization's closure.²³¹

Not only has the U.S. made significant monetary investments in Afghanistan, but we see foreign investments, too. Looking at foreign direct investment (FDI) in Afghanistan over the last twenty years, a clear trend has been established, investment trended upwards after years of U.S. intervention and spiked in 2006 to nearly 4.5% net inflow of GDP. During this same time, troop levels in Afghanistan were on the rise, reaching nearly 20,000 troops in 2006. While there is no correlation between foreign investment and perceived security levels based on troop numbers, what is clear is that 2006 saw a significant drop off in foreign direct investment, falling below 0.5% post-2018 despite rising troop levels during the 2011 surge, and then the eventual decline through 2018.²³²

FDI provides only one insight into how finances impact the overall economic growth of a country. In their 2020 study, *Impact of FDI on economic growth*, the authors Baiashvili and Gattini propose potential impacts, "FDI does not only provide needed financing for capital accumulation, but also supports the import of positive externalities in terms of new inputs and foreign technologies in the production function."²³³ What is more uncertain however, is the relationship between security levels in a country and the propensity for outside companies to invest in a country. Why Afghanistan's FDI seems to decline over recent years is hard to say, but there could be a correlation between perceived security and willingness for companies to invest and send resources to a potentially volatile location.

²³¹ Zimmerman, Egel, and Blum, 57.

²³² The World Bank, "Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (% of GDP) - Afghanistan," *The World Bank*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.WD.GD.ZS?end=2019&locations=AF&start=2001&view=chart>.

²³³ Tamar Baiashvili, and Luca Gattini, *Impact of FDI on economic growth: The role of country income levels and institutional strength* (European Investment Bank, 2020), https://www.eib.org/attachments/efs/economics_working_paper_2020_02_en.pdf, 17.

Despite the significant economic investments made by the U.S. in Afghanistan, they are drastically less than the amount of security assistance the U.S. invested in Afghanistan, including SOF. Financial investments make up one part of the operational environment, as it is critical to assess all elements. This brings us to the financial element of national power that will be assessed next.

5. Financial

Attempting to improve national governance and sovereignty in a country that by and large governs, creates issues in funding a large national government. Governance is tied to a budget and dollars are needed to fund a variety of initiatives, including security. Blum and Conway argue that taxation and funding directly impact the sovereignty and legitimacy of the state, and should seek over time to decrease the legitimacy of an insurgency.²³⁴ External funding plays a huge role in enabling insurgent operations, as quoted by Jeremy Weinstein, “resources generated from external patrons require little if any civilian labor, so groups with such support remain largely independent of civilian populations for their survival.”²³⁵ Research into how the financial instrument has supported other efforts to include SOF operations was not apparent. However, from looking at a 2011 press statement from the Department of Treasury, it appears it has supported operations in a variety of means:

Attacking the finances of terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan: Denying the Taliban and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan access to funds has long been a priority within TFI. Treasury has intensified its efforts in this arena over the past year as part of the President’s enhanced strategic focus in this critical region. Our approach is grounded in efforts to disrupt and dismantle illicit financial networks and to build domestic capacities within Afghanistan, all designed to undermine the financial networks of illicit actors and safeguard the nascent, but growing Afghan financial sector. Treasury staff in Washington and on the ground in Afghanistan, Pakistan

²³⁴ Blum, David M., and Conway, J. Edward, eds. *Counterterrorism and Threat Finance Analysis during Wartime* (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2015), ProQuest.

²³⁵ Jeremy Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York NY: Cambridge University Press) Kindle edition, p. 173 in Blum and Conway, *Counterterrorism and Threat Finance Analysis during Wartime*, 45–46.

and the Gulf are working with others to aggressively attack the finances of the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups operating in the region.²³⁶

These efforts may have been persistent at the national level and were undoubtedly instrumental either targeting key Taliban and Al Qaida leaders or helping to remove their access to funding streams. However, the financial arm alone cannot target these organizations at scale. Most likely, considerable intelligence and information were handed off to SOF and other military elements to take lethal action, or to law enforcement components to arrest insurgent leaders. These efforts did not fix all the systemic problems in Afghanistan, and national and even provincial level government funding to include taxation have been stymied, (lacking attention,) as USSOF and other elements continue to chase insurgent leaders with lethal targeting efforts. (what is the foregoing sentence trying to convey?)

6. Intelligence

Intelligence undoubtedly provides a key component to any effort or conflict. Traditionally, intelligence is considered a military function, and could arguably be lumped under the military instrument of DIMEFIL. However, it is important to distinguish it, especially in the unique case of Afghanistan. Intelligence operations from a U.S. perspective could include elements of SOF, traditional military intelligence capabilities, and other governmental agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency. Additionally, as the U.S. focused heavily on growing Afghan capabilities to include intelligence and SOF contributed to this effort, it is important to look at how effective such capabilities were. It is also important to identify how well intelligence was integrated to other operations and instruments of DIMEFIL, as intelligence alone does not win a war. Actioning intelligence is what generates effects.

One of the challenges of Afghanistan for SOF, both in conducting unilateral operations and in advising Afghan Security Forces (ANSF) was a lack of intelligence

²³⁶ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Fact Sheet: Combating the Financing of Terrorism, Disrupting Terrorism at its Core," *U.S. Department of Treasury Press Center*, September 8, 2011, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1291.aspx>.

infrastructure, and often ANSF were dependent on coalition units for intelligence.²³⁷ Sustainability is a recurring theme in Afghanistan. British SOF would continually provide only intelligence capabilities which they believed Afghan units would have access to post-coalition withdrawal.²³⁸ For USSOF advising Afghan National Army Special Operations Forces (ANASOF), USSOF imposed their high op-tempo on ANASOF by using U.S. intelligence assets, often overwhelming the newly established capabilities of ANASOF to conduct synchronized operations, which forces ANASOF to become completely dependent on USSOF for intelligence and operational planning.²³⁹ This drive for lethal action once again comes up, as U.S. units continually pushed their Afghan units to conduct raids and other kinetic focused actions to presumably put pressure on Taliban and insurgent forces. Intelligence traditionally enables military and law enforcement operations, however if most of the intelligence was generated from U.S. capabilities, Afghan intelligence capabilities simply do not have a chance to develop and improve. This lack of sustainability in Afghan initiatives has prolonged the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan.

7. Law Enforcement

The community-based approach to policing has been central to the village stability operations (VSO) program, where local stakeholders such as tribal leaders share the responsibility of security with their American and Coalition counterparts. This focus gave rise to initiatives such as the Afghan Local Police (ALP) which was a key element to the VSO program where SOF would work with local key leaders and find members of each village who could work as security with a minimal police function.²⁴⁰ This initiative saw good adoption by local communities, however it was wrought with challenges such as

²³⁷ Austin, Long, Todd C. Helmus, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt, and Peter Chalk, *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR713.html, x.

²³⁸ Austin Long et al., 11.

²³⁹ Austin Long et al., 35.

²⁴⁰ Donald Rector, "Afghan Local Police: An Afghan Solution to an Afghan Problem," *Small Wars Journal*, January 10, 2012, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/afghan-local-police-an-afghan-solution-to-an-afghan-problem>.

vetting for ALP members to prevent insurgents from infiltrating ALP organizations, and funding primarily came from the USG and NATO partners.²⁴¹ One of the benefits of this program was the advent of a combined approach in these villages, where ALP units would often be stood up with development projects designed to give an economic boost to the village and improve quality of life, at least minimally, for the village. As of 2020, it appears that the program was on the cutting block for funding, with the Afghan government hoping to start an ALP weapon reclamation program, with the aim being to push current ALP members into the Afghan National Army and other Afghan security apparatus, thereby prevent adding to insurgent populations. As force numbers in Afghanistan continue to decline, the long-term benefit and fate of programs such as the ALP remain uncertain.²⁴²

D. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

One of the things the U.S. military and specifically SOF does well in low intensity conflicts where near peer threats are non-existent is use lethality and create space where lethal acts impose high cost on insurgent groups such as the Taliban in Afghanistan. Did this high cost imposed through the countless drone strikes, high value target kill/capture missions, and partner national security force capacity building generate any effect? Only time will tell whether these operations can contribute to lasting peace in Afghanistan and the creation of a sovereign security partner for the United States. But looking at investments over the last 20 years of conflict suggest that the limited successes achieved militarily in the form of kinetic action through targeting of Taliban leadership, or training Afghan security forces will not create a stable environment that aligns with U.S. interests in Afghanistan.

The premise of this thesis is not to argue that a smaller footprint could have turned the tide in the war. Instead, much like an investment portfolio of stocks and bonds, perhaps

²⁴¹ Mark Moyer, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police* (Macdill AFB, FL: Joint Special Operations University, October, 2014), https://www.socom.mil/JSOU/JSOUPublications/JSOU14-7_Moyer_VSO_FINAL.pdf, 10.

²⁴² Howard Altman, "Why dissolving the Afghan Local Police Program troubles its American architects," *Military Times*, May 27, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/05/27/why-dissolving-the-afghan-local-police-program-troubles-its-american-architects/>.

a more balanced approach of diverse activities across the DIMEFIL spectrum would have contributed to mission success. Cultural challenges have been highlighted through this analysis, evidenced through the USG's attempt at partner capacity building in a multi-ethnic and multi-tribal environment that makes up Afghanistan. SOF are expected to be the premier force capable of engaging with a wide variety of cultures and language, and yet Afghanistan seemed to be out of reach for this full cultural literacy concept for which SOF often assumes capability. SOF clearly has contributed in developing a significant SOF partner capability in Afghanistan, capable of standing on its own and executing its own security operations, but is it enough to engage with just security forces only? Could engagements within the civil domain such as the development of more local businesses and increasing local police capabilities have made a difference? Perhaps not, due to the daunting complexity of the Afghanistan environment.

E. FINDINGS

As presented in this case study, the USG as a whole made a significant investment in the development of Afghanistan's capacity to become a legitimate and self-governing nation through large troop deployments, significant economic and development investments, and time, as Afghanistan is now America's longest standing war after nearly 20 years of conflict. What does the USG have to show for it? The case of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan shows that simply doubling down and increasing troop deployments and economic expenditure does not translate into achieving strategic objectives. SOF could potentially bridge the gap in helping prioritize high value areas for FDI with security resources to encourage FDI and enable long term economic growth. The U.S. experience in Afghanistan shows that U.S. and coalition intelligence alone cannot win the war or achieve strategic objectives, and that partner intelligence and synchronization is necessary, which has been significantly lacking in American trained Afghan units, even those developed by SOF such as ANASOF.²⁴³ It shows that unmeasurable matters, such as information messaging and cultural nuances, and that disparate agendas across unified action partners does not necessarily correlate to improving the strategic forecast. It is also

²⁴³ Austin Long et al., *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond*, page x.

this author's opinion that the greatest impediment to achieving some winnable situation in Afghanistan was the over reliance on military action, and a failure to balance all elements across the DIMEFIL model in a way that was proportional to the needs of the situation.

IX. COMMON THEMES AND THREADS

To provide a holistic picture of how SOF integrates into the elements of DIMEFIL and engages with the civil domain, this section discusses the common themes and threads that emerge across each of the case studies examined in this thesis. Writing this thesis, I originally thought I was investigating how to use DIMEFIL to integrate SOF into all the instruments of national power. What I found repeatedly across the case studies presented here is that the DIMEFIL model is too simple of a model to try to apply to the matter of statecraft. The level at which SOF often finds itself operating has far reaching strategic effects from its operations. Often what I found is that practitioners attempted to parse out each of the letters of DIMEFIL and “check the box” to make sure their operations addressed each of the elements. This perspective has been shared increasingly in recent years as strategists embrace the increased rapidness of change and growing complexities of our modern world. John Meiser says it best, in his white paper, “Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy”:

The concept of a comprehensive or whole-of-government approach to solving strategic problems fosters an overemphasis on simplistically applying resources—the means. By this logic, whatever the problem is, simply apply all the elements of national power— diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL)—and the problem is solved. Under this approach, the strategist simply fills in each box or, better yet, creates a diagram showing each element of national power as a line of effort directed at an enemy center of gravity or critical vulnerability.²⁴⁴

However, after analyzing each case study, the things that stand out are the operations where the main force, SOF or otherwise, integrated itself into DIMEFIL; and where they appeared to make themselves aware of the finer nuances of their operating environment, were better at balancing operations across DIMEFIL. This approach permitted SOF, as in the Colombia and Philippines cases, to eventually achieve some form of victory.

²⁴⁴ Jeffrey W. Meiser, “Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy,” *Parameters* (46(4) Winter 2016–17, 82, 2017) <https://ssrn.com/abstract=376222182>.

Two interesting cases that compare and contrast this point were Afghanistan and the Greek Civil War. Both cases saw lethality and military force as a contributing factor to the cases' success in the case of the Greek Civil War, or failure in the case of Afghanistan. The DIMEFIL approach offers only one of the conditions that could be considered for each success and failure. There were many contributing factors in the case of Afghanistan that led to failure by USSOF and the USG beyond simply using too much force, such as pre-existing societal and cultural structures that made national governance difficult. In the cases of Colombia and the Philippines, both saw success over a ten-plus year time horizon with limited U.S. military assistance in terms of number of personnel deployed to each country. In both cases, USSOF found ways to tie in closely with U.S. country teams and coordinate operations and initiatives, instead of creating redundant or disparate efforts. In the case of the Crimean Annexation, Russia enjoyed several advantages considering the amount of power the oligarchy controls, that allowed it to effectively time its various approaches across DIMEFIL as it challenged Ukrainian sovereignty. I've demonstrated in this thesis that DIMEFIL can be used as a model to assess a country's approach to competition or conflict when attempting to identify how much lethality is necessary to achieve a political objective, but it alone does not give a planner or practitioner of warfare or statecraft the full picture. Other factors play into the overall assessment of a security situation, and one would not be prudent in deferring to the use of only one model or another when developing strategy for effective statecraft.

X. LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

All research comes with certain limitations, and this thesis is no different. For this research, only five case studies were selected that highlighted the use of various elements of DIMEFIL and their application in a slightly different way. Additional case studies could have uncovered additional insights, but a mass synthesis of every potentially relevant case study is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, the selected cases were chosen because they represent varying experiences of conflict. Each of the five case studies were selected for specific reasons. Colombia shows a conflict where the U.S. invested over a long term horizon, balanced its use of DIMEFIL, and enabled its partner, the Colombians, to begin exporting security. The Greek Civil War showed a much shorter time period of investment from the U.S. where lethality and economic assistance stopped the spread of communism in northern Greece. The Philippines shows a complex operating environment in the Pacific area of operations that required USSOCOM to advise their Philippine partners on defeating multiple insurgent groups simultaneously. The Russian annexation of Crimea looks at this research question from a Russian perspective and addresses how the Russians sought to use elements of DIMEFIL in their operations while leveraging other population bases. Afghanistan was selected because it still has not reached resolution for U.S. interests after 20 years of conflict, and shows how overwhelming use of force does not necessarily translate into victory.

To improve this research, a case study from the Chinese perspective and how they would have potentially incorporated elements of DIMEFIL in their operations might have been beneficial; which is a great prospect for future research. Several of the case studies in this thesis highlight internal security issues, such as dealing with terrorism or an insurgency. This approach was intentional, as case studies were chosen based on the use of DIMEFIL in USG operations, and not necessarily whether the host state faced an internal or external security issue. Future research should examine case studies that provide opportunities to discuss external security issues. Moreover, this research does not examine cases across each major geographic region of the U.S. military's combatant commands.

This limitation presents another opportunity for future research to explore by investigating cases relevant to Pacific Command (PACOM) and elsewhere (e.g., Africa).

One of the most significant limitations uncovered in this research was the simplicity and redundancy of the DIMEFIL model. DIMEFIL certainly presents an excellent starting point when discussing the elements of national power that could potentially affect a strategic campaign in a country during great power competition. Yet it has challenges. One of those challenges in using DIMEFIL was the similarity and unclear distinction between the “economic” and “financial” elements of DIMEFIL. My conclusion after performing the research suggests that the DIMEFIL model was originally intended to be applied to a counter insurgent or terrorist centric conflict where the main aggressor is a non-state actor. In such instances, it was assumed that the economic instrument of power had more to do with the economic state of a country, region, or area, and that financial had more to do with the financial transactions funding a non-state actor. In cases such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, where this non-state actor acted in a similar fashion to a state, it can be easy to differentiate between economic and financial. Yet, when moving to the state and international system level, I found it increasingly difficult to distinguish between economic activity and financial transactions as the two typically go hand in hand. Meiser would share my sentiments in difficulty of applying the DIMEFIL model to complex problems found in conflict:

But, starting with the notion of seven and only seven forms of national power and all of them should always be utilized to implement a whole-of-government solution is infantile. In fact, General Dempsey recently seems to have added another element of national power to the list: energy. So now we have DIMEFIL? The point is there is no set number of tools a government can use to solve a problem, to think otherwise is foolhardy.²⁴⁵

The DIMEFIL model can work in limited instances when applied to great power competition, but as with all models, at some point it no longer adequately models reality. I recommend USSOCOM looks at developing its own model to assess all the elements of national power it often leverages as it incorporates other USG agencies and organizations

²⁴⁵ Meiser, “Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy,” 85.

into its operations. One of those areas it does not address that has become increasingly more relevant is the cyber domain. Along similar lines, social media's relevance to information domain has become increasingly important and may warrant its own separate assessment for operations.

Each of the case studies in this research looks at slightly different conditions, but generally the same problem, with the challenge being to find the correct application of lethality and military force. One of the challenges of research was identifying case studies which could potentially reflect future conditions of competition and conflict in which the U.S. may find itself. The case studies of Colombia, Philippines, Afghanistan, and the Greek Civil war all deal with sub-state conflicts. The Greek Civil War, and Crimea each deal with conflicts that transcended the state level, whose effects were felt on the global stage by great powers. It was important for case study selection to find case studies that had ample data and previous research that could describe the nature of the conflict, and depict U.S., or in the case of Crimea- Russian, intervention. Some approaches in the cases of internal state conflict may still provide only context and insights at the state and sub-state levels. However, I believe the overall assessment of how SOF enabled or did not enable a balanced approach to using elements of DIMEFIL remains invaluable and will apply throughout the next era of competition or conflict.

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XI. SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH

There are many topics that could be further explored in this area of research. While some methods were uncovered that could be implemented by USSOCOM, more research could identify specific actions in the civil environment which may produce the most effects across the instruments of national power. Research focused on identification of how influence is developed in the civil domain could illuminate which types of organizations and individuals would be most helpful to SOF conducting operations in a civil environment.

The DIMEFIL model was chosen for this thesis due to its simplicity and ability to capture most of the instruments of national power that contribute to strategy making. While this model suited the purposes for this research, future research should look at identifying a new model that better encapsulates other elements that are currently at play in the operational environment such as cyber-related capabilities and the growing relevance of social media. Political warfare is another area that should be looked at for inclusion in a similar DIMEFIL model, as the world has been witness to Russian and other nations' attempts to meddle in political elections around the globe.²⁴⁶ A more robust version of the DIMEFIL model that could distinguish irregular warfare capabilities from conventional warfare capabilities could provide planners a more holistic assessment of how resources were being allocated towards either conventional warfare forces such as U.S. Army infantry divisions or unconventional warfare forces such as U.S. Army Special Forces.

Further research should explore how increasing allocations to one instrument of power, for example increasing the budget of the Department of Defense, either improves or detracts the strength of other instruments. I recommend using a form of systems modeling to investigate this topic. further, as it was an original avenue intended to pursue, but was eventually disregarded to scope this research. (do you need the 2nd half of the foregoing sentence?)

²⁴⁶ Young Mie Kim, "New Evidence Shows how Russian Election Interference has Gotten More Brazen," *Brennan Center*, March 5th, 2020, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/new-evidence-shows-how-russias-election-interference-has-gotten-more>.

Finally, the future of conflict always remains vague to the practitioner and scholar alike. Hopefully this thesis uncovered a small glimpse at the future of warfare where civil components will take a more active role in the outcome of competition or conflict. Warfare in the future may look less like conventional ‘force on force’ large-scale combat operations. In that eventuality the ability to influence and control a population in the civil domain becomes increasingly strategic and more valuable.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. A COHESIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Going through each of these case studies brought several proverbial ‘elephants in the room’ to the forefront of the strategic thoughts of this paper. One challenge is how the DOD conceptualizes the problem set and the contemporary operating environment. One of those elements is the challenge of synchronizing efforts across not just USSOCOM and the DOD, but the whole of government. This is challenged by a clear lack of doctrine or system for the established collaboration and coordination among agencies to achieve mutually supporting agendas. The second challenge is how SOF trains. Most units will conduct some sort of pre-mission training prior to deployment, most likely spending time at one of the combat training centers. This presents an opportunity for SOF to train more extensively on understanding and operating in the civil domain.

B. JOINT AND INTERAGENCY DOCTRINE

Competitors of the United States often appear to fuse their civil and military effects and engagements, which combines elements of their elements of national power into one approach so they can synchronize resources and objectives to support their national security objectives. While the U.S. has a multitude of agencies capable of engaging other elements outside of the realm of security, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Department of Commerce and Agriculture, USAID, and State Department, no one is more uniquely positioned, nor has the capability and resources to do this at scale other than USSOCOM. These facts do not diminish the need for increased communications, coordination, and collaboration across agencies, it only makes it more necessary. However, DOD, and specifically USSOCOM must engage with the civil environment, potentially through a DIMEFIL framework that synchronizes all elements of national power, to deter and counter competitor attempts at gaining traction in contested spaces.

While the U.S. military developed new doctrine to face emerging threats, all USG agencies need to develop and continually update their strategy for future competition and

conflict. Most recently *FM 324* was developed to deal with the insurgencies that had destabilized Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁴⁷ *FM 324* evolved thoughts on new age counterinsurgency doctrine because both the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Army adopted it, two distinct land forces. Just as the USG developed joint doctrine for counterinsurgency (COIN), interagency competition doctrine needs to address a whole of USG approach.

Several documents present the current operating environment, and how adversaries use hybrid warfare against the United States. However, no doctrine appears to focus solely on coordinating multi-agency strategy and tactics to counter hybrid challenges. *TC 7-100* defines hybrid threats for training environments, but fails to address strategic implications.²⁴⁸ Joint Special Operations University published a report discussing the rise in hybrid challenges and recommended changes to U.S. policy, emphasizing USSOCOM.²⁴⁹ The Asymmetric Warfare Group routinely publishes supplements highlighting Russian tactics, but often does not address the broader picture and challenge that facing these threats requires.²⁵⁰ Fighting in a hybrid warfare environment, above or below the level of armed conflict, requires synchronizing all elements of national power, and none of these resources, even integrated country strategies (ICS), accomplishes this. An ICS defines the USG's goals for diplomacy, development and defense for a given country, but fail to describe how and when agencies work together, share resources, and maximize opportunities to face hybrid challenges.²⁵¹ These hybrid warfare documents show that a gap in inter-agency doctrine exists and why the USG must develop doctrine to

²⁴⁷ TRADOC. *FM 324, Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, District of Columbia: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2010). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/fm3_24.pdf

²⁴⁸ TRADOC. Training Circular 7-100, *Hybrid Threat*. (Washington, District of Columbia: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2010). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/tc7_100.pdf

²⁴⁹ Timothy B. McCulloh and Richard B. Johnson. *Hybrid Warfare*, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2013).

²⁵⁰ Asymmetric Warfare Group. *Russian New Generation Warfare Handbook*. (Ft. Meade, MD: Training and Doctrine Command, 2013). <https://info.publicintelligence.net/AWG-RussianNewWarfareHandbook.pdf>

²⁵¹ Department of State. *Foreign Assistance Resource Library*. 02 June 2020. <https://www.state.gov/integrated-country-strategies/>

continue to compete in the international system. More research and doctrine would also be required as to how best to incorporate private sector into similar discussions with an integrated whole of government approach, and how SOF can best support such discussions while engaging partners and operating in the civil domain in forward environments.

C. COMBAT TRAINING CENTERS

A useful place to test new strategies for future investment and integrating DIMEFIL into operations are combat training centers (CTCs), such as the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, CA, and the Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft. Polk, LA. Each of these centers are used by SOF to train for upcoming rotations and deployments. During the 2000s, these centers focused on counterinsurgency training for units rotating through, to get ready for their deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq. This served a purpose, but was still reactionary in nature, as it was training for a conflict already going on. Currently, CTCs focus on direct action both for SOF and conventional forces, as lethality has become the focus of training given the outlook from leaders within the DOD of a possible large scale combat operation on the horizon. While this is beneficial and represents part of the investment the DOD needs to make specifically as it pertains to SOF, it is only part of it. The other part is irregular warfare, and the investment that needs to be made during training like at CTCs and other joint and combined exercises. These types of investments must focus on other elements of DIMEFIL beyond the military realm, specifically SOF's ability to leverage the information and intelligence. This investment will pay significant dividends, as shown earlier how adversaries are seeking to leverage military capabilities to dominate in places such as the information domain. Each of the strategies presented could also be tested and refined in a simulated mission environment such as at CTCs.

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XIII. CONCLUSION

Lethality will always be necessary to deter adversaries and prevent capability overmatch in conflicts. However, lethality is not always the solution to solving conflicts no matter the scale. Future competition and conflict will require USSOCOM to use the appropriate amounts of force at ideal times, along with other elements of national power. Case studies presented in this thesis showed that each operating environment is condition dependent, and that for the USG to be successful in achieving its political objectives, it must apply the appropriate amounts of each element of national power at ideal times. Conflicts are dynamic, and therefore require strategic planners and decision-makers to constantly assess current investments of each element of national power and ensure those proportions will create future outcomes consistent with U.S. goals.

In the case of the Greek Civil War, and to some extent Colombia and the Philippines, an optimal amount of lethality seemed to be reached as the U.S. adapted its approach to each of those conflicts. For the Greek Civil War, U.S. military assistance in the form of advisors and material to include firepower such as artillery and air support assets enabled the GNA to overpower the DAS in a short time horizon of nearly five years. Economic assistance played another significant role in helping the Greek government establish legitimacy with its own people as the reach and influence of the DAS slowly diminished due to combat operations. In Colombia, the U.S. took a more protracted approach, keeping force levels low, but seeking alternative methods in the use of national power to achieve synergy across the instruments of DIMEFIL and across U.S. agencies. Coordination at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota was critical to this effort, and undoubtedly, the low amount of USSOF in Colombia enabled U.S. operations to remain focused on supporting overarching U.S. strategic political objectives. As the number of forces in a given area grows, the ability for U.S. military planners to synchronize operations and align with other government agencies diminish as illustrated by the Afghanistan case study. This begs the question whether the nearly 110,000 troops deployed to Afghanistan were truly necessary, or simply were viewed as a silver bullet by policy makers hoping to end an

already unusually long war that had seen no end in sight. It is important to contrast the time horizons of each of these case studies.

Strategic thinkers and planners should employ multidisciplinary solutions as problems continue to grow in complexity. SOF needs to continue to integrate with the interagency and private sector, even at the tactical level when the situation dictates. Military commanders need to see the operating environment as a complex world, where solutions will no longer be as simple as choosing to use force or not to use force.

The civil domain is the next battlefield of the future and will not look like it has in the past, with M1A1 Abrams tanks moving across a desert expanse sighting in T-90s. Instead, the battlefield of the future will be fought within and among components of civil society. Integrating non-lethal effects such as influence in the information and cyber domains, with lethality when relevant, and combining those with other elements of national power such as diplomacy, economic and even law enforcement will create solutions closer to the strategic political end-states the USG often seeks.

As warfare becomes more complex and multi-polar, leveraging multiple elements of national power is critical to success in competition, conflict, and beyond. USSOCOM must identify how it plans to develop capabilities and forces that can operate in the civil domain. USSOCOM must invest in learning how to incorporate multiple elements of DIMEFIL into its operations for the most effect. It must continue to identify how competitors of the U.S. leverage the civil domain and other elements of national power for their gain, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The civil domain presents an opportunity for SOF to increase its direct impact on great power competition and focus on long term strategic gains. The DOD continues to respond well to crises as they surface, and politicians ask the U.S. military to do more globally in fiscally constrained environments. The need for a clear investment strategy for SOF with estimated return on investment needs to be established, and the civil domain cannot be overlooked. Any investment strategy will need to be integrated horizontally and vertically across the department, and laterally across other agencies, taking into account the global reach of SOF, and the need for multiple elements of DIMEFIL to be leveraged

simultaneously. The DOD has been challenged with thinking creatively about future conflict and identifying what needs to be done now to invest for the future. By looking at the ends, ways, and means adversaries of the U.S. seek to employ in the civil domain and how they fuse civil with military capabilities, the DOD should assess each element of DIMEFIL and determine what can be gleaned as it develops future investments in national security. After analyzing the resources, objectives, and methods adversaries are currently pursuing, the DOD must invest now in its employment of SOF in the civil domain. SOF can meet challenges from adversaries along the DIMEFIL spectrum if DOD can recognize and define how SOF will contribute to an investment strategy for a future in the civil domain. As the DOD looks to the future to determine what investments need to be made in the present to attain long term strategic goals, it must think creatively about not just conflict, but its employment of SOF and how SOF contributes to goal attainment

The civil domain presents an opportunity for the Department of Defense and specifically USSOCOM. The civil domain is also vast, it is essentially the world as we know it, and as we don't know it. But if the DOD stays focused on the military components of the operating environment, it is opening itself up to additional risk in the form of adversaries who seek to operate in the gap between civil and military capabilities. The United States has the advantage of its innovative American economy supporting its adaptive military forces, so change is possible, and fueling the collaboration between the public and private sector is essential to drive U.S. foreign policy forward.

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