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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Title:

UNITED STATES MILITARY PUBLIC DIPLOMACY:
A POWERFUL INSTRUMENT OF SOFT POWER

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: United States Military Public Diplomacy: a Powerful Instrument of Soft Power

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Thesis: The United States military currently conducts soft power activities primarily in support of American hard power, but it is not communicating its strategic message correctly to the different stakeholders and audiences abroad. A whole-of-government approach to soft power through military public diplomacy would achieve more effectiveness, legitimacy, and transparency in order to accomplish national foreign affairs objectives.

Discussion: The bad employment of the different military soft power capabilities has made counterproductive the efforts of the United States in its war against terrorism after 9/11, generating a lot of anti-American feelings not only in the Muslim world but also in broad international audiences. The excessive use of military power in the War on Terror has achieved some kinetic strategic objectives, but not much benefit in the audience perception for the lousy use of strategic communications in support of the efforts of war. The Department of Defense (DoD) actions must support the State Department policy in international relations, and not vice versa. The military abroad, with a more multilateralist approach, would benefit United States public diplomacy. Furthermore, the lethal military ethos may change to improve the organizational culture, transforming the servicemembers into better tools of soft power in support of the American narrative.

Conclusion: The DoD is not taking advantage of military public diplomacy and nation-branding as powerful tools in support of the United States foreign policy. The DoD, in a whole-of-government approach to foreign policy, needs better coordination with the range of instruments of influence on foreign audiences. Also, a multinational approach is necessary. The military organizational culture may also change to better use its military not only as tools for war but also as instruments of soft power through public diplomacy, especially during periods of peace, in crisis-response, and in stabilization operations.

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Preface

“[I] say to you: That we are in battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma....”

Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musa al-Zarqawi,
July 2005¹

Twenty years of experience in the Spanish Marine Corps has transformed me from a warfighting second lieutenant into a soft power believer. My tours in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), and United Nations (UN) force operations and more than six years as an analyst of the Defense Policy Directorate at the political-strategic level in the Spanish Ministry of Defense converted me into a multilateralist defender of stabilization and crisis-response operations. A Master in Communications in the Public Administration and my experience as a student of the Command and Staff Course in the Marine Corps University have shown me the importance of winning the battle of narratives with soft power, through strategic communications and public diplomacy. After some own recent researches about soft power and strategic communications, this paper tries to study how a good use of military public diplomacy may support the United States and other countries to accomplish their national foreign affairs objectives.

Introduction

According to The Oxford Dictionary, power is “the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.”² States have four tools to influence foreign policy, four sources of power: diplomacy, economy, information, and the military. There are three different ways to apply power, smart power being “the combination of the hard power of coercion and payments with the soft power of persuasion and attraction.”³ All the policies and actions of a government or its representatives, including the military, communicate and influence its external image.

Military actors not only have an essential role during the war. The situation of the world after World War II and the mindset of modern societies have made most of the western armed forces constabulary forces in the international arena, without forgetting their power of influence and preparedness for war if necessary. In 1997, “Secretary of Defense William Cohen projected that peace operations would pose the most frequent challenge for the military” in the next decades.⁴ Although western militaries mainly train to be prepared for the fight, they are most of the time in peace or building the conditions for stability and security in different regions under conflicts or crisis.

The extended presence of the United States military in the international arena allows the armed forces and its service members to become another powerful tool of its foreign policy. This military presence abroad in diplomatic positions, operations, and international organizations communicates the narrative and the image of a country, primarily through military public diplomacy and also nation branding. The use of soft power in the seeking of peace, security, and defense through the employment of strategic communications, public affairs, new technologies, and military diplomacy is a core issue in the military of the 21st century.

Although the American armed forces are deployed in many countries and participate in exercises, security cooperation, civil affairs actions, and numerous humanitarian and stability operations around the world, their mission have been mainly focused in the use of force in defense of the interests of the United States. Thus, the foreign audience does not normally perceive its military action as a means that defends the peace, democracy, development, and the wellbeing of humankind.

The military must use its resources for public diplomacy because its presence abroad is often a significant point of communication with the host country, especially at the beginning of a conflict or crisis. To do so, the Department of Defense (DoD) should support and coordinate the efforts of other governing agencies that related to public diplomacy, such as the Department of State (DoS). The future central military role could be a soft-power struggle more than a lethal force in the traditional war.

In 2009, the United States applied in its foreign policy the concept of “smart power,” a combination of soft and hard power, as a solution to solve most of its communication problems with some foreign audiences, especially after the interventions in the first phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, expanding it to the rest of the War on Terror throughout the world. However, smart power did not work and the United States lost the war of perception among foreign audiences in the fight against terrorism, because of some mistakes: the wrong integration of soft power in support of hard power; the failure in the demilitarization of the foreign policy, with lack of coordination between the DoD and the DoS; and the military ethos opposition, rejecting to be employed as constabulary forces in non-combat operations.

The United States military currently conducts soft power primarily in support of American hard power, but it is not communicating its strategic message correctly to the different

stakeholders and audiences abroad. A whole-of-government soft power approach through military public diplomacy would achieve more effectiveness, legitimacy, and transparency in order to accomplish national foreign affairs objectives. The United States “lessons learned” using smart-power after Afghanistan and Iraq may apply not only in future operations and wars but also in other states seeking to use their military for soft-power purposes.

This paper is organized into three sections. First is the description of the terminology and means upon which the military must influence foreign audiences, mainly the population, as the “center of gravity” in modern warfare. The second section analyzes smart power, first how the United States armed forces developed it in support of their nation’s foreign policy to gain “hearts and minds” after the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan; and second why they were not effective in communicating the American narrative. The third section is focused on military public diplomacy, explaining the whole-of-government approach to soft power, and examining the activities of the United States military public diplomacy in support of its soft power to help to win the battle of narratives in the international ground.

Section 1. Statecraft, Soft Power, Public Diplomacy, and Nation-Branding

The objective of this section is to explain why soft power through public diplomacy is a significant national-power instrument. Diplomat Chas W. Freeman describes the meaning of statecraft in these terms, “Statecraft translates national interests and concerns into national goals and strategies. It is the strategy of power. It guides the ways the state deploys and applies its power abroad. These ways embrace the arts of war, espionage, and diplomacy.”⁵ The art of statecraft is the holistic use of diplomacy, military capabilities, economic resources, intelligence sources, information systems, and cultural tools by a political entity for strategic purposes.⁶ Diplomacy is the sound management of the perception that different actors and the public have

of a country. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 indicated the functions of the diplomatic missions, more specifically: the representation of the state, the protection of its interests and citizens abroad, the negotiation with the host government, the collection of information, and the promotion of friendly relations.⁷ Now, other means have overcome these functions to develop diplomacy. Statecraft reflects the integration of different instruments and resources of power and recognizes how these instruments might work in the rest of the spectrum of tools. Thus, the DoD and its military abroad can affect not only with violence and the use of force but also in all the instruments of power, diplomacy, economy, and information with the extensive use of their broad capabilities.

The term soft power describes a country's ability to get what it wants by attracting rather than coercing others, by engaging "hearts and minds" through cultural and political values and foreign policies that other countries see as legitimate and conducive to their interests.⁸ Thus, soft power is the power of "attraction" as opposed to the power of coercion or payment, called hard power.⁹ A country's soft power could come from three sources: its culture, political values, and its foreign policies.¹⁰ Joseph Nye asserts that "seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive."¹¹ The official instruments of soft power include public diplomacy, broadcasting, military-to-military contacts, exchange programs, development assistance, and disaster relief.¹² The DoD has means to develop all these missions.

According to Craig Hayden, "soft power encompasses three broad categories: influence, the force of one actor's argument and, perhaps most important, the attractiveness of its culture and institutions."¹³ Influence could be defined as the ability to modify the perception that the audience has over our activity: governments, public opinion, and population. It is about the

generation of confidence, the increase of the reputation and the management of the relations with all the stakeholders abroad. The measures that contribute to a good perception of an actor's attractiveness are credibility and trustworthiness, increased by the relative importance of media and communications outlets for actors seeking to cultivate soft power.¹⁴ However, it is not only attraction but also shared interest, the necessity to build something together. Transparency is also an essential concern in the new era of technology and communications. The coherence between saying, doing, and being, obliges the inclusion of communication in strategic planning.¹⁵

Public diplomacy is one of the tools of statecraft that attempts to leverage soft power. During the Cold War, the United States was looking for a term that could explain its overseas influence activities in a way that made them sound benign. Public diplomacy was far more suitable than “propaganda” or “psychological warfare” because it removed the pejorative connotations.¹⁶ Bruce Gregory provides one broad definition of public diplomacy: “Public diplomacy has come to mean an instrument used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behavior; to build and manage relationships, and to influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values.”¹⁷ States are the primary international actors in public diplomacy, not only alone but also with allies, partners, and international organizations. However, other actors have begun to participate in the international arena developing an intense foreign policy: regional governments, multinationals, NGOs, lobbies, cities, and individuals participate and influence decisions that affect international politics.

Today’s technological opportunities lead to change the model from a different approach to foreign policy. The citizen, in almost any country on the globe, has a growing capacity to be more and better informed, through social networks and the Internet, to participate in activities, to

comment on a multitude of matters that, due to their interest, have global repercussions.¹⁸

According to professor Rafael Rubio, currently “an emergent society of knowledge” aspires full involvement, information is the raw material of power, and public diplomacy must be at the forefront of governments' external action.¹⁹ Hence, public diplomacy is not propaganda anymore because the debate among foreign publics is open, express, global and digital, even being based on the defense of the interests and position of a country.²⁰ Thus, reputation, influence, and credibility are the traditional pillars of diplomatic activity which now require a projection into digital networks.²¹ As both international and domestic politics carry out online, they have empowered the public and increased the importance of instruments like public diplomacy as a tool of statecraft.

Because states must communicate and influence foreign publics, how they manage their reputation and credibility is important. According to Nick Cull, the nation branding is one of the essential tools of contemporary public diplomacy.²² The image of a country or nation-branding has a direct connection with the management of the public image at the highest level: international relations. Public diplomacy is essential, but official public diplomacy institutions represent only a small part of how foreign publics are engaged; very often, because traditional public diplomacy means are limited and not well-integrated into other tools of statecraft, the military must make the leading efforts in public diplomacy and nation branding. Moreover, the military, like the diplomat, represents his or her country abroad, doing the branding and public diplomacy.

1.1. Armed Forces Soft Power: Military Diplomacy, Strategic Communications, and Military Public Diplomacy.

The armed forces are under certain circumstances, as in case of war, the main foreign policy instrument. Hence, in wartime, the military is supposed to be the coercive, violent fists of statecraft, a hard-power weapon. In the other situations along the spectrum of the conflict, it is a fundamental tool, augmenting efforts in diplomatic, economic, and information goals. Thus, most of the time, in peacetime and low-intensity conflicts, the armed forces abroad are primarily tools of diplomacy, called military diplomacy. Military diplomacy is defined as “the activity of military and civilian forces of the Ministry of Defense of the state, which is carried out with a view to the enforcement of its foreign policy objectives, and which is of a non-combat (non-violent) nature.”²³ Military diplomacy reflects the utility of armed forces outside of combat for influencing other countries and advancing national interests.

Military diplomacy is generically understood as the use of military capabilities at the service of the foreign policy of a country.²⁴ Security cooperation, a tool of military diplomacy, has primarily been part of the toolkit of international realpolitik in the preservation of a balance of power by supporting allies and counterbalancing enemies.²⁵ The combination of diplomatic-military actions of influence is not new.

President John F. Kennedy said to U.S. Naval Academy graduates: “You military professionals must know something about strategy and tactics and logistics, but also economics and politics and diplomacy and history.”²⁶ According to Donald A. Carter, Kennedy believed in a transformation of the Army “into a politically astute, socially conscious force,” capable of fighting guerrillas, but also of participating in the broader social engineering and nation-building effort.²⁷ The United States military trained local troops, collaborated with foreign officers, and

helped solve the social conditions for instability by building infrastructures, providing medical aid, and contributing to peace and security.²⁸ Kennedy was anticipating what kind of operations the military should develop in the future to face the challenging and changing world. Some activities that run the military in benefit of security are: supporting diplomatic missions in security-related activities, developing military assistance in the new democracies, or establishing trust between the military of different countries. These examples illustrate how the military can serve an important role that complements and amplified traditional diplomacy. Military diplomacy also contributes to the public dimension of diplomacy and soft power.

If soft power represents the means by which a country cultivates a positive reputation, the military can play a vital role in it. Currently, outside the soft power benefits of humanitarian aid, the U.S. military has a narrowly defined strategic conceptualization of soft power, that is present in the term “strategic communications.” The term "strategic communications" denotes a whole-of-government influence effort. The Army Field Manual FM3-13 defines it as:

“...focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.”²⁹

Furthermore, this also involves information operations, “the integrated employment, during military operations, of information related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.”³⁰ Information operations include: military information support operations (MISO), Operations Security (OPSEC), Electronic Warfare (EW), Computer Network Operations (CNO) and Military Deception (MILDEC).

Those definitions are similar to public diplomacy, but they are not the same.³¹ Public diplomacy seems to be an overt form of communication within the broader term of strategic

communications and influence because the military can use some “special” information weapons, among others: deception, cyber, or psychological operations to influence the audiences, usually directed mainly against the enemy. The term strategic communications, conceptually related to efforts to cultivate soft power, has been controversial for both domestic and foreign audiences; this paper presents the potential of a military public diplomacy beyond the established terms of strategic communications or information operations. Neither public diplomacy practices are intended to serve as tools of ‘political warfare, which is a term to describe the coercion actions to undermine adversaries, short of war.’³²

“Political warfare consists of the intentional use of one or more of the implements of power (diplomatic, information, military, and economic) to affect the political composition or decision-making within a state. Political warfare is often—but not necessarily—carried out covertly, but must be carried out outside the context of traditional war.”³³

Public diplomacy shares some similarities with political warfare, as it involves the use of non-violent, non-aggressive military means to influence. The objective, however, is not to manipulate, coerce, or force the target audience, but to cultivate credibility and understanding among foreign publics in order to achieve foreign policy ends. Just as the military can serve a diplomatic role, so too can it serve a role in public diplomacy. The armed forces abroad are also significant contributors to the image of a country, its nation branding. As Nye affirms, “A well-run military can be a source of admiration in some countries while misuse of military resources can also undercut soft power.”³⁴

The next section treats how the United States unsuccessfully attempted to win its war against insurgency and terrorism after the first interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq through smart power. It tried to nest soft power and hard power, focusing not only on the threat but also on “hearts, minds, and the distribution of humanitarian aid” to affect the population, before, during, and after the combat.³⁵

Section 2. Smart Power Attempt

In 2003, Joseph P. Nye Jr. developed the term smart power to counter the misperception that soft power alone can produce effective foreign policy.³⁶ “Smart Power is the combination of the hard power of coercion and payments with the soft power of persuasion and attraction.”³⁷ According to Nye, it is evident that soft power is not the solution to all problems, while a weapon may not be the best tool to promote democracy, human rights, and the development of civil society. However, he defended that “empires are easier to rule when they rest on the soft power of attraction as well of the hard power of coercion.”³⁸ The relationship between hard and soft power appeared to be “mutually enabling” in the sense that “soft power flows to the owner of hard power.”³⁹ Already in 2007, in the “CSIS Commission on Smart Power. A Smarter, More Secure America”, Nye provides recommendations to avoid the decline of the United States’ image and influence:

“Rebuilding and reinvigorating the foundation of alliances, partnerships, and institutions that serve our interests; elevating the role of global development in the United States foreign policy; bringing foreign populations to our side through public diplomacy; economic integration for growth and prosperity; and technology and innovation addressing climate change and energy insecurity.”⁴⁰

In 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton adopted the term smart power because she thought it would provide a better balance of military and diplomatic instruments be the solution after the initial mistakes and potential failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. Hence, the U.S. attempted smart power as a whole-of-government approach: “the full range of tools at our disposal, which includes diplomatic, economic, military, political and cultural tools”; she thought that with smart power, diplomacy would be the “vanguard of foreign policy.”⁴¹ Thus, “diplomacy and development will be equally important in creating conditions for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous world.”⁴² America sought to help in stability operations where partners and allies

build the capacity to defend and govern themselves. While smart power was one of the efforts to develop US foreign policy that was not so reliant on the military, it still did not adequately utilize the potential of a soft power approach

2.1. Losing the hearts and minds of the world

An essential assumption in this study is that the United States armed forces are not transmitting the American strategic message correctly to foreign audiences. The Iraq War created more terrorist recruitment, uniting American enemies and dividing its friends.⁴³ The Global War on Terror caused hard opposition against the United States, particularly inside the Muslim world. The 2008 research conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org supported by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, showed that in some predominantly Muslim countries over 70 percent Muslims supported the goal of al Qaeda to “push the US to remove its bases and its military forces from all Islamic countries.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, significant numbers approved attacks on US troops based in Iraq, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan. Surveys found that Muslim populations surveyed believed that the US has goals hostile to Islam itself.⁴⁵ All these data demonstrate that the United States public diplomacy had failed, at least in the Muslim public opinion. However, smart power did not work as a solution to face this issue, because it tried to use coercive and persuasive tools at the same time, with limited results.

As of 2017, the situation had not improved significantly in worldwide foreign audiences about their opinion on United States soft power; the Pew Research Center's 2017 survey suggests that publics around the globe were against American ideas and customs.⁴⁶ Even among ten European countries surveyed, no majorities supported Americanization, the process by which people or countries become more and more similar to Americans and the United States. Only

about a third of the Dutch (32%) and Spanish (31%), and a quarter of the Germans (26%) support U.S. soft power, and only a quarter of Russians (27%); in the Middle East, the situation is worse: just 15% in Jordan and 13% in Turkey. Thus, the anti-American sentiment remains common and has not improved much since the turn to a so-called smart power strategy during the Iraq War.

While favorability may not be a foreign policy objective, polling suggests a different soft power approach if the United States seeks to build credibility given its extensive military operations abroad. Smart power alone was insufficient as a policy to use the military to advance U.S. interests. This next part explains why the use of smart power, while useful to fight against terrorism and insurgency, failed to attract key foreign audiences, seeking the weaknesses or mistakes of smart power: the use of soft power only in support of the extensive use of hard power, the lack of coordination between the DoD and the DoS, the problems associated with the demilitarization of the foreign policy, and the military attitude against its role in non-combat and stability operations.

2.2. Soft Power to Support Hard Power

At the beginning of the War on Terror, the United States government had already developed soft power efforts mainly focused on supporting hard power capabilities to defend its foreign policy. These efforts yielded counterproductive outcomes. One example of misapplied soft power through strategic communication in support of kinetic actions happened in 2003 during the Second Iraqi War, where the United States forces mislead the American media and their audiences to achieve deception on the Iraqi forces in its attack over Fallujah. When Lieutenant Lyle Gilbert told the media that the United States forces had crossed the departing line in the Battle of Fallujah, he used a soft power tool, public affairs, to achieve deception in the

insurgency; the attack began three weeks later.⁴⁷ The media and the audiences were outraged by the ruse, since they considered that providing false information to the media and its domestic audience was unacceptable, regardless of the ultimate goal that was to support the kinetic warfare or hard power. The United States government was manipulating, and information was perceived as propaganda, dealing a serious blow to U.S. government credibility.⁴⁸

At a strategic level, using soft power tools to justify the war in Iraq and the War on Terror may have alienated audiences, rather than increasing attraction. As Janice Bially Mattern argues, the term “war on terror” was trying to show attractiveness with “moral and righteous” action after the evil acts of September 11, 2001 (9/11), while downplaying perhaps the real retaliation measures “against the persons responsible for the 9/11 attacks.”⁴⁹ The United States was using “representational force” to coerce foreign audiences into submission, by stating that foreign publics were either “with us or against us.”⁵⁰

In 2009, when Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State; she introduced a “Defense, Diplomacy, and Development” (3D’s) approach as suitable means for statecraft, and that the military should contribute to the United States partner countries’ capabilities by advising, training, equipping, transferring technology and combat monitoring the partner nation’s military forces. Her plan was a clear case of using the military for soft power. With the presidential mandate in the National Security Strategy 2010,⁵¹ the DoD was able to transform the military, even special forces, into “3D Operators.”⁵² They were multidimensional service members especially prepared in the 3Ds; DoD would “find and train military with language skills, grounded in the local culture, diplomatically astute, and experts in specialized tactical skills.”⁵³ However, their primary mission was to support a so-called “indirect approach” to defeat the enemy, rather than an integrated “3D” foreign policy.

The indirect approach was “the application of military and non-military action by, with, and through partner nations to influence, neutralize or defeat an enemy by shaping the physical and psychological environment in which he operates.”⁵⁴ It may include kinetic actions to kill an enemy or disrupt his plans and operations. Major General Bennet S. Sacolick, a previous commander of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, argued that “terrorist organizations like the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Hamas, and Hezbollah must be defeated at the local level by a combination of development, diplomacy, and defense, hence global engagement.”⁵⁵

In this implementation of smart power, special operations forces deployed as supposed “armed humanitarians” to help build partner-nation capacity or to combat terrorist networks and to handle endemic social problems.⁵⁶ However, their mission was still to help to kill and defeat the enemy. The potential of soft power was not fully realized.

2.3. Attempts to Demilitarize the Foreign Policy

According to Nye, although “the Pentagon is the best-trained and best-resourced arm of the American government,” it cannot apply hard power to solve some foreign issues.⁵⁷ The image of over-militarization of the foreign policy may change, and deflecting resources and budget from the DoD towards the DoS could enhance the American soft power. After 9/11, the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld ordered the creation of interagency organizations to fight together against terrorism. All the Combatant Commands created Joint Interagency Coordination Groups. These groups also helped the DoD lead United States foreign policy at the expense of diplomatic tools of the statecraft. In 2007, Robert Gates still under the Bush Administration defended the idea of the need to enhance soft power by “a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security, diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign

assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development.”⁵⁸ Yet the problem remained to be addressed at the policy level until the Obama administration.

In 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton began her tenure by stressing the need to elevate civilian power alongside military power as equal pillars of United States foreign policy. One of her DoS principal strategists, Anne-Marie Slaughter, defended the so-called “21st-century statecraft” and the Obama administration's vision of the 3Ds. It was a commitment to a smart power approach and sought authorities and funding to build the DoS expeditionary capacity that would help demilitarize American foreign policy.⁵⁹ However, as Nye explains, “many instruments of soft power are scattered around the government, and no overarching strategy or budget even tries to integrate them.”⁶⁰ Smart power could not be balanced if the United States spent five hundred times more on the military than on broadcasting and exchange programs.⁶¹ This new policy found the opposition of the military apparatus, with larger influence in the U.S. Congress.

As Dereck Reveron affirms in *America's Viceroy*s, defense issues are more politically compelling than foreign policies for elected officials; the defense spending provides tangible evidence of solving problems of national security while foreign assistance and public diplomacy sound less necessary to the voters.⁶² While the U.S. government wanted to develop a more demilitarized foreign policy, Congress maintained the military budget. The resources of the DoS or other agencies part of “21st Century statecraft” remained low or declining. The burdens of statecraft remained increasingly on the DoD. Attempts at demilitarization were not successful and by extension, attempts to draw on the benefits of soft power were not realized.

As an example, Ambassador Edward Marks complained about how United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) had over-militarized United States policies and programs. Marks

argued that military leadership is counter-productive unless subordinated to the DoS, and that AFRICOM could not be the focal point of the foreign policy in Africa, because it is not the image that the United States wants to promote abroad.⁶³ Furthermore, AFRICOM's staff of about 2,000 military personnel against 30 civil servants, "can hardly claim to be a balanced representation of government policy that is anything other than military in nature."⁶⁴

However, this DoS weakness does not mean that the military does not have the tools to advance American foreign policy interest through means other than force. Combatant commands have soft power resources at their disposal to improve the US foreign policy. One example of the military leadership in foreign affairs was the creation of the Trans-Regional Web Initiative (TRWI), a series of DoD-funded news websites that operate in regions where countering violent extremism (CVE) was a priority.⁶⁵ Though headed by Special Operations Command, each website in the program was operated by the corresponding combatant command for the targeted region. *Maghrarebia.com* is an example of a successful website operated by USAFRICOM. Traditionally, this kind of tools would be managed by the DoS and the United States Agency for Global Media (US AGM). These examples suggest that the United States could utilize its military resources to promote diplomacy and not just to maintain traditional warfighters. In January 2019, DoS, DoD, and USAID signed a new interagency framework, known as the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR), to avoid the traditional interagency friction in conflict environments.⁶⁶

2.4. Military Ethos Against Stabilization and Non-Combat Missions

Transforming the military into warrior-diplomats for balanced warfare is not an easy task. The main problem is the cultural differences and recruitment practices between DoD and DoS. The military is organized mainly to wage war, while Foreign Service officers are trained to

employ peaceful means to advance the national interest and goals. Thus, the United States military is not organized or staffed as an instrument of soft power. For example, Joint Publication 3-29, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA), says:

“FHA provided by US forces is limited in scope and duration; designed to supplement or complement the efforts of the host nation (HN) that has the primary responsibility for providing that assistance; and may support other United States Government (USG) departments or agencies. Although US military forces are organized, trained, and equipped to conduct military operations that defend and protect US national interests, their inherent, unique capabilities may be used to conduct FHA activities.”⁶⁷

There is an inclination in the military ethos to use the lethal force and avoid specific responsibilities in non-kinetic military operations. In post-conflict stability operations, this is codified in doctrine. The joint publication JP3-07 Stability affirms that “In general, stabilization is usually the responsibility of the host nation (HN), DoS, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with support by the Department of Defense (DOD) conducting stability actions as necessary.”⁶⁸ Yet doctrine also acknowledges that military forces be responsible for non-kinetic efforts. The military force must be prepared to plan and execute United States Government stabilization efforts until it becomes feasible to transfer that responsibility to another organization.⁶⁹ The multiple roles of the military, associated previously with a smart power approach to influence, was not without criticism. While the smart-power approach had advocates within the military because of noted accomplishment in several conflicts, others complained that it turned the military into “armed humanitarians” doing social work.⁷⁰

However, the critical question is whether the U.S. military can avoid potential soft power responsibilities. Likewise, can the military conduct public diplomacy and social influence as a tool of foreign policy or not, given the military ethos, its existing warfighting missions, and growing stabilization and crisis response operations. In the latter, the military conducts actions

for tackling poverty, bridging divides, serving children and women in crisis, changing cultural norms and values, building institutions, and a host of other civilian missions.⁷¹ This suggests that more investment in soft power is possible, but not without challenges.

The American military mindset seems aligned with what Samuel P. Huntington prefers; armed forces prepare to fight the wars to achieve the political objectives of the government and the public opinion.⁷² However, this mindset may evolve toward the more flexible and pragmatic theory of Morris Janowitz. Janowitz defended that the military must be prepared not only for war but also for constabulary and humanitarian missions. Janowitz claimed, "the use of force in international relations has been so altered that it seems appropriate to speak of constabulary forces, rather than military forces."⁷³ He also anticipated the incompatibility between missions; "the professional soldier resists identifying himself with the police."⁷⁴ He was, in effect, predicting in 1971 Krulak's "Three Blocks War theory," later developed in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁷⁵

General Charles C. Krulak describes in the "Three Blocks War" a hypothetical urban scenario in which the forces of the United States Marine Corps were forced to develop offensive, defensive, and stabilization operations in three different and adjacent blocks of the same city. At a specific moment, the troops will provide food and clothes to refugees and displaced population, developing necessary humanitarian assistance. Immediately, they will be separating two factions in conflict carrying out peace-building operations. Soon after, they may be fighting lethal medium-intensity combat, all in a day and in three adjacent blocks of the same town.⁷⁶ In 2008, the Army developed a new manual on operations that stated: "Army doctrine now equally weights tasks dealing with the population - stability or civil support - with those related to

offensive and defensive operations. Winning battles and engagements is important but alone is not sufficient. Shaping the civil situation is just as important to success."⁷⁷

The changing requirements of military operations in the future means that the military must train to be better prepared to develop peacekeeping, peacebuilding, stabilization, and humanitarian operations. The military is not only a warfighter but a tool of soft power and public diplomacy. This is not just a matter for the DoD and strategy. Military commanders and staff officers may be trained to deal with allies, partners, international organizations, and interagency institutions in order to manage the complexity of future responsibilities and understand the potential of a soft power approach to using military capabilities.

Section 3. Military Public Diplomacy

Mathew Wallin, in his report "*Military Public Diplomacy, How the Military Influences Foreign Audiences*" defines military public diplomacy as: "military communication and relationship building with foreign publics and military audiences to achieve a foreign policy objective."⁷⁸ Military public diplomacy is necessary because the military represents a significant point of contact between the United States and foreign publics. The military presence abroad can improve the image of the armed forces and their country substantially in the international audiences through personal contacts, technology, and social media, collaboration with the foreign press, expansion of the culture, the development of humanitarian and reconstruction actions, using the military professionalism as a multiplier factor.

Military public diplomacy builds personal relationships among defense authorities: deploying advisors and counselors in governments and institutions for capacity-building; interchanging military personnel and units; sending liaison officers to military staffs of allies and partners; and deploying training teams in crisis zones. The bilateral agreements in defense and

security are a necessary tool that can be categorized as part of military public diplomacy, as they can send important signals about the values and credibility of the country.⁷⁹ However, when the military sells or donates equipment and other materials and provides training, advising, and mentoring of security forces abroad in bilateral or multilateral collaborations, this is more of an example of hard power-based military diplomacy.

The military can increase the effects of assistance and similar programs thanks to soft power, through public affairs efforts that can take advantage of the connectivity of information technologies. DoD institutions and commands use digital diplomacy, maintaining and improving web pages, and using social networks. Combatant commands have created social media intelligence (SOCMINT) instruments to control the contents of webpages and social networks,⁸⁰ in close collaboration with private civilian partners, such as YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, that were removing harmful contents.⁸¹ The DoD and the DoS created interagency units, to disseminate the American narrative, employing different online and printed resources. In the case of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC), it was created to fight against the violent extremism online.⁸² In 2016, the DoS replaced the CSCC with the Global Engagement Center (GEC), to “lead, synchronize, and coordinate efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining United States national security interests.”⁸³ GEC coordinates with other bureaus, offices, and agencies, identifying deficiencies and duplicative efforts, enhancing partnerships and improving messaging and programs abroad.⁸⁴ Although focused on Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran threats, this center is a good example of interagency coordination to achieve foreign affairs goals that could leverage the capabilities of the military to support public diplomacy efforts.

The DoD also encourages the participation of the press and media in the trips and activities of the authorities abroad, facilitates the access of local press to bases and operations, including embedding local journalists or international correspondents in the programs. Trained officers on specific issues may participate as experts in radio and television programs abroad. Also, it promotes connecting military members abroad with communication professionals, forums, informative breakfasts, and organizes seminars and forums in public institutions, foreign universities, and participation in think tanks. This kind of efforts can be expanded.

The deployed units and commands can also expand foreign audience exposure to American culture, promoting films and TV series, in coordination with existing country-specific programs with the DoS and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (US AGM). These kinds of programs can help foreign publics understand the mission and scope of military operations abroad. The military can also teach and promote the language in schools in close alliance with the language institutes, doing or collaborating in radio and TV programs, explaining the institutions, the political system, the treasures of their country and their people. State Department public diplomacy efforts provide a set of activities that the DoD can draw from and deploy with its considerable resources.

The armed forces are often the first push in the commitment in crisis management to the international community, playing an active and very beneficial role in catastrophes and humanitarian crisis. The military in Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA) and Foreign Disaster Relief (FDR) operations builds schools and hospitals, rebuilds destroyed houses and bridges, restores roads and airport tracks, tends communication lines, among a long list of activities, also feeding and curing thousands of people. All of these actions have not only tremendous humanitarian value but also improve perceptions about U.S. commitment in crisis-

response situations. A good example is the earthquake relief in Haiti in 2010 where the United States, China, Brazil, and other countries increased their soft power by using military resources.⁸⁵

Finally, military professionalism is not incompatible with soft power and public diplomacy. The United States military presence abroad can project values, ethics, and balanced positions, defending not only the national interests but also the common goods, strengthening the position and image of the commitment of the armed forces in the international context.

3.1. Effective American Military Public Diplomacy

Officially, the United States military does not engage in public diplomacy, which is under the purview of the DoS.⁸⁶ Thus, the DoD has officially supported a "we do not do public diplomacy" narrative, although a lot of DoD activities are designed to support DoS public diplomacy.⁸⁷ DoD calls these communication activities "Defense Support to Public Diplomacy" (DSPD), while this paper uses the term military public diplomacy to recognize the practical impact of engaging foreign audiences.⁸⁸

In September 2018 the DoD had over 172,370 active duty troops deployed abroad, 22,299 reserve, and 32,302 civilians, in 164 different countries, without counting the military positioned in operations in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.⁸⁹ These numbers show that the United States military presence abroad is an essential representation of its country at any time. In a crisis, those military members are usually the first people the populations meet and the first ones in influencing them. The military workforce serves as a substantial nation-brand tool, not only during peace and stabilization operations but also during the war; even fighting, the military is a public diplomacy tool.

In a practical sense, public diplomacy is a responsibility of the DoS, but the DoD spends a considerable amount of resources on Security Cooperation, which is a public diplomacy tool, although it could be considered hard power if it provides weapons, equipment, and training. These efforts “sheds light on the arguments that the DoD’s security-assistance spending is overtaking the State Department.”⁹⁰ In 2019, the DoD plans to spend \$7.5 billion to build up Afghan and Iraqi Security Forces and assist other countries to fight with NATO and the coalition there, plus \$2.5 billion in security cooperation activities. The DoS has \$4.8 billion for its program to finance the foreign military.⁹¹ The sum of efforts means the United States is investing \$14.8 billion collectively in activities related, at least potentially, to military public diplomacy.

Military public diplomacy also plays a role in shaping perceptions and messaging about the use of force and the legitimacy of U.S. operations. International relations are now a battle of strategic narratives.⁹² Paul Cornish defines narrative as a “statement of identity, cause, and intent around which government, people and armed forces (and perhaps even some allies) can unite.”⁹³ He argues that this narrative must be convincing, transparent, adaptive, and above all, attractive. The best way to align this straightforward narrative at all the levels of conflict, from the tactical to the political, is mainly through soft power, with some basic actions to enhance military public diplomacy.

As Nye defends, if the United States “continues to define its power too heavily in military terms,” its instruments of soft power will be diminished, and soft power is “fragile and can be destroyed by unilateralism and arrogance.”⁹⁴ Thus, the United States must not intervene alone, using multilateralism to gain support and also make the others share the burden of the global peace and security, as in United Nations and NATO operations, where the United States “pays a minority share.”⁹⁵ A multilateral approach to foreign policy may also present opportunities to

limit the use of force, which may harm other soft power efforts. A kinetic approach may sometimes be necessary to protect the national interests abroad; however, diplomacy and development will be equally crucial in creating conditions for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous world. Thus, kinetic actions are not always the most effective tools of messaging for every situation; rather they should be the last resource in most situations. While the U.S. did rely on public diplomacy and development aid, its presence abroad was mostly military. As Robert Kagan explains:

“[T]he United States is quicker to use military force, less patient with diplomacy, and more willing to coerce (or bribe) other nations in order to get the desired result. Europe, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on diplomacy, takes a much longer view of history and problem solving, and has greater faith in international law and cooperation.”⁹⁶

This aggressive policy has impacts on soft power. Foreign publics relevant to United States interests have different attitudes towards the legitimate use of force. According to Nye, only 25 percent of Europeans, in contrast to 71 percent of Americans, accept the use of war to obtain justice.⁹⁷ “While hard power may get others to do what you want it will, neither increase your attractiveness, legitimacy nor the adoption of your values.”⁹⁸ Besides, while the United States demonstrates the capacity to act alone, it usually has to seek coalitions with allies and partners to gain legitimacy in its interventions. In contrast, European countries generally work inside international organizations of peace, defense, and security, as in the UN, EU, NATO, or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Multilateral approaches to the use of the military can build credibility and improve soft power.

Narratives may be crucial to framing U.S. actions. A soft power approach would develop a multilateral narrative that defines U.S. leadership and interests for foreign audiences and partner countries. In 1962, Konrad Adenauer, the German chancellor, said that “the United States is the leading power, but according to the concept of freedom, leading does not mean

commanding, ...to exhort to unity, to set an example for the others to follow.”⁹⁹ President Obama officials recommended that despite the widespread presumption that America must always be in charge, effective leadership is not always in Washington. At times, the United States interests are best served when others lead a coalition or even take the place at the helm.¹⁰⁰

This multilateral commitment could also be improved through the enlargement in quantity and quality of the military presence in international organizations of security and defense, facilitating and promoting the collaboration among the organizations and the friendly countries, in order to consolidate and strengthen those multinational structures and relationships. For example, the United States, the EU, and NATO have "supported the establishment of an independent European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki," as one of their responses to fight against the Russian hybrid threat.¹⁰¹ This center, although with limited resources, will help different actors to respond to threats “from low-level conflict and cyberattacks to disinformation and political and economic subversion and coercion.”¹⁰² The contribution of the United States military is significant in this multinational effort.

One way to manage the message and help shape the narrative of U.S. foreign policies is to centralize the coordination of these efforts. Previous attempts to coordinate 21st Century statecraft provide a possible example to build upon, and there is a precedent for a whole-of-government approach. While the Department of State should continue to retain responsibility, this essay shows that there is much room for improvement in the US military’s contribution to America’s power. The armed forces should work closely to coordinate soft power actions, just as there is a high level of coordination in case of application of hard power (kinetic and coercive operations). According to the joint doctrine, JP 3-07 Stability, United States military actions must be “conducted in coordination with and in support of HN authorities, other USG

departments and agencies, international organizations and NGOs.”¹⁰³ The DoS Bureau of Political Military Affairs has political-military planners working with the combatant commanders, while Military Information Support Teams (MIST) are small military groups to support, augment, and broaden existing public diplomacy efforts in U.S. embassies.¹⁰⁴ These points of contact can help coordinate priorities and objectives abroad between the DoS and the DoD.

Furthermore, the United States International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Military Exchange Programs offers an opportunity to establish and maintain relationships of influence with the militaries of other countries. This mutual-beneficial military-to-military relationship increases understanding and defense cooperation. Additionally, the DoD created female engagement teams to lead in the international community in an effort for the integration and protection of women in the world by using the great potential and leadership of women in uniform. As Robert Egnell affirms, the female military can help women to push for their rights and participate in peace and development processes.¹⁰⁵ Training and education generate soft power through leading by example.

Improving military public diplomacy to cultivate soft power is not always easily reconciled with foreign policy objectives. All the military deployed abroad must understand that they are tools of its country foreign policy, knowing what the political ends are. To achieve the unity of efforts, military commanders must take advantage of interagency, joint, and multinational cooperation, increasing the capacities and support of the host nation, and furthering helpful engagement with the local population.

The military abroad must be as transparent and truthful as possible, reducing unnecessary levels of secrecy. Wikileaks and Edward Snowden's leaks have deeply affected trust in American

diplomacy. Its foreign policies are under the constant scrutiny of the public through media and social networks; thus, all the cyber and psychological operations on the adversary, public information, and civil-military actions must be carefully reviewed. Personal contacts with local populations, the military, and civil authorities can help shape perceptions to align (or at least tolerate) U.S. strategic objectives. It is essential to understand foreign publics, to develop different messages directed to some of the primary stakeholders to influence abroad, who are the affected population, the media, and the public opinion, authorities, and personalities, the foreign military, diplomats, cultural institutions, enterprises, and the rest of the international community.

It is a fight in the cognitive domain, the called “battle of the narrative.”¹⁰⁶ The only way to win the audience is to be able to nest the say-do gap. Because military actions are complex, operations may be at cross-purposes with soft power. The military must be conscious of the possible repercussions of an individual or small-unit actions on public opinion, especially foreign audiences. Some controversial or insensitive actions can have catastrophic consequences that are not proportional to the level of command; wrong tactical actions can have strategic penalties. Nye explains that “the treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo in a manner inconsistent with American values led to the perception of hypocrisy that could not be reversed by broadcasting Muslims living well in America.”¹⁰⁷ How to avoid these kinds of mistakes involves more than just messaging. Adopting a military public diplomacy set of strategies also involves different approaches to training. As Robert Egnell argues, the military may change the way they recruit, train, and deploy its soldiers and officers for combat and stability operations. “The ideal warrior mindset has not done the armed forces any favors in Iraq and Afghanistan.”¹⁰⁸

Military public diplomacy should communicate the United States as a facilitator of dialogue and understanding from a vision of equal to equal, not of colonial, imperialist, or

western supremacy over peoples of weaker or foreigners' cultures. What Nye argued in 2003, "any retreat to a traditional policy focus on unipolarity, hegemony, sovereignty, and unilateralism will fail to produce the right outcomes" applies to the current American foreign policy.¹⁰⁹ Thus, to find the strategic message abroad is vital; Carter's narrative of "our policy is rooted in moral values which never change. Our power is designed to serve humankind" is not similar to Trump's policy of "America first."¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The United States military has been conducting soft power primarily in support of American hard power, but the military should more broadly serve the purpose of cultivating or using soft power, principally through public diplomacy; the military plays a *de facto* role as an essential public diplomacy and nation-branding actor, that must support the nation's foreign policy.

Foreign policy is a policy of the state, executed by multiple institutions. Public diplomacy efforts should also employ interagency efforts; the government should direct and coordinate between the Departments of State and Defense, among other agencies. Public diplomacy becomes a whole-of-government struggle, aligned and nested within a United States public diplomacy strategy.

Most foreign policy solutions require collaboration among states, with partners, coalitions, and multinational organizations. Even the United States, with an overwhelming military capacity, cannot win all the wars or resolve the conflicts by its own applying hard power.

Finally, all the military service men and women are also loudspeakers of their service and their country abroad. What service members say and do, aligns narratives and increases the

opportunities for cultural contact and understanding on the occasion of the significant military presence around the world. Likewise, acting in the information environment is crucial to influence the population perception of ethical behaviors and attitudes for the benefit of operations. The prestige of the armed forces and the professionalism of service men and women is very high within the international community, but it must be improved in the public perception. Every service member communicates. The potential of the military as a resource for public diplomacy is not fully realized.¹¹¹

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