

ASSISTANCE OR *PARTENARIAT*?: LESSONS IN SECURITY COOPERATION
AND PARTNERSHIP FROM THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN AFGHANISTAN
AND FRENCH OPERATIONS IN THE SAHEL

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Strategic Studies

by

DANIEL K. DILLENBACK, MAJOR, ARMY
M.S., Missouri University of Science and Technology, Rolla, MO, 2017
B.S., Boston University, Boston, MA, 2011

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2022

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Name of Candidate: Daniel K. Dillenback

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Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Leonard E. Verhaeg, M.A.

_____, Member
Lester W. Grau, Ph.D.

_____, Member
William M. Raymond Jr., Ph.D.

Accepted this 10th day of June 2022 by:

_____, Assistant Dean of Academics for
Degree Programs and Research
Dale F. Spurlin, Ph.D.

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ABSTRACT

ASSISTANCE OR *PARTENARIAT*?: LESSONS IN SECURITY COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP FROM THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND FRENCH OPERATIONS IN THE SAHEL, by Daniel K. Dillenback, 135 pages.

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Dedicated to my wife and kids, who continue to love and support me as I whip them around the country and try to figure out what I want to be when I grow up.

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ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
CPMO	<i>Centre Terre pour le Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel</i> (Land Center for Operational Military Partnership)
CUI	Controlled Unclassified Information
DRA	Democratic Republic of Afghanistan
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FSF	Foreign Security Force
FSFD	Foreign Security Force Development
JP	Joint Publication
KGB	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti</i> (Committee for State Security)
KhAD	<i>Khadamat-e Etela'at-e Dawlati</i> (State Information Agency)
KMAG	Korean Military Advisory Group
MINUSMA	<i>Mission Multidimensionnelle Intégrée Des Nations Unies Pour La Stabilisation Au Mali</i> (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali)
MNLA	<i>Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad</i> (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)
MVD	<i>Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del SSSR</i> (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OE	Operating Environment
PC	<i>Partenariat de Combat</i> (Combat Partnership)

PDPA	Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PME	Professional Military Education
PMO	<i>Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel</i> (Operational Military Partnership)
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFAB	Security Force Assistance Brigade
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WAD	<i>Wezarat-e-Amnyate-Dawlatee</i> (Ministry of National Security)

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NOTE ON RESEARCH DATE OF RELEVANCE

The challenge of academic research on contemporary topics is the ever-changing nature of the international security environment. This research project began in October 2021 and ended in May 2022. While research on historical topics changes more slowly as time passes, recent events change the perspective, opinions, and even content of the near past and can color or affect the relevance of the research. One of the cases studied in this project is French Operations in the Sahel Region since the 2000s. This project's research ended in early May 2022 and future events may alter or even invalidate the observations made. Nevertheless, the researcher hopes that this project's hard work and thorough methodology stand the test of time and contribute long-term to the standing body of knowledge on the subject.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

What critics fear is that strategists like me will—if we have our way—drag the military away from its “warfighting” core values into a larger, messier context where the commanders will lose control to outsiders, where funding for high-technology combat systems will lag, and where the warrior spirit will be lost. They are right to level this charge, and yet I will plead Not Guilty. Yes, I do wish to change this military dramatically, but I likewise believe the time has come to admit that we need two militaries: one to fight wars and one to wage peace.

—Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map*

Background

The Global War on Terror often seems to have initiated a perpetual existential debate in the military. What is the military’s purpose? What is the Army’s role? Many Soldiers, especially those interested enough to debate, will argue that they exist to fight and win the nation’s wars.¹ Indeed, this answer is the stated mission of the Army and has been for years. So why do they find themselves increasingly in non-combat roles? Why does the Army take the time to train and equip other nations? To prevent war? To bide time? For all the idioms about might making right, to the victor going the spoils and history being written by the victor, at some point, the United States became the most powerful military force on earth and found that in part due to its actions, the rules had changed.

Throughout the history of warfare, going back to the classical era, societies primarily waged war in competition with their neighbors. Whether republics, monarchies, or empires, societies vied in competition with one another and executed war to achieve supremacy, a phenomenon often compared to punctuated equilibrium evolution in

biology.² After a protracted military and cultural struggle, conquering another society often led to exploitation through violence, slavery, pillaging, or genocide. In authoritarian models, the victor has no reason to go to war if not to take from their neighbors. On the rare occasion that society found itself at the top of the pyramid, they often enjoyed a relatively brief period of peace before their conquered neighbors devised a new way to defeat them.

Notwithstanding Britain's naval supremacy confining him to the continent, Napoleon defeated every foe and encountered a dilemma when he controlled Europe. When one has come to power through conquest, victory means no more avenues exist to secure that power. The existential question of "what do I do next?" finds most nations unprepared. In Napoleon's case, the answer was simply walking farther and conquering more, which led to his eventual defeat. These patterns are common across conquering nations, from Genghis Khan to Alexander the Great to Adolf Hitler. By the time the United States found itself at the top of the pyramid, there was no domestic desire for expansion, and in a democracy, the President cannot set such an agenda without Congress. In the case of the United States, this balance of power often leads to vacillation between domestic passions for globalism and isolationism. This frames the existential problem mentioned at the beginning of this section, ironically caused by the question: "What is an army's role in a nation with no existential threats?"

The creation of the Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs), a permanent unit, is an overt recognition and acceptance of the military's role in operations short of war. This cognitive shift is further solidified in the Army's strategic roles in supporting

the joint force: shaping operational environments, preventing conflict, prevailing in large-scale ground combat operations, and consolidating gains.³ The 2018 National Defense Strategy further codified the importance of this mission set.

By working together with allies and partners, we amass the greatest possible strength for the long-term advancement of our interests... Our allies and partners provide complementary capabilities and forces along with unique perspectives, regional relationships, and information that improve our understanding of the environment and expand our options... We will strengthen and evolve our alliances and partnerships into an extended network capable of deterring or decisively acting to meet the shared challenges of our time.⁴

The Army operates in an increasingly complex international security environment characterized by persistent conflict, great power competition, degradation of the post-World War II rules-based international order, and increased threats from transnational terrorist and criminal organizations. If the Army is going to succeed in shaping operating environments, preventing conflict, and consolidating gains, it will need to be exceptional at building partner capacity through Security Force Assistance (SFA).

Unfortunately, the United States has, with the notable exception of the Republic of Korea, failed to achieve definitively successful outcomes through SFA. Cooperation with China was primarily out of necessity and did not lead to a stable partner in the region. South Vietnam fell within three years, the results of SFA in Iraq are tenuous, and the Taliban defeated the Afghan National Army within two months. The United States will not be successful if it relies on building an institutional understanding of best practices over the next several decades. This research project seeks to explore the experience of other nations to draw lessons that may help the Army succeed in this mission.

Problem Statement

Beyond our core alliances, we will also double down on building partnerships throughout the world, because our strength is multiplied when we combine efforts to address common challenges, share costs, and widen the circle of cooperation.⁵

The 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance recognized the imperative of building partnerships outside of the United States' core allies to achieve national interests.⁶ This understanding permeated the 2018 National Defense Strategy's strategic approach, which called for expanding alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, forming enduring coalitions in the Middle East, and supporting relationships to address significant terrorist threats in Africa.⁷ SFA is a critical part of security cooperation in developing and sustaining these partnerships with developing nations. However, the United States has limited experience in successfully developing foreign security forces and cannot develop this capability through trial and error.

Purpose of the Study

This study provides background for strategic decisions regarding the definition, role, and use of SFA. It does so by identifying and analyzing observations and lessons learned from non-U.S. examples of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD) and synthesizing them into recommendations for U.S. operations.

Research Questions

The primary research question seeks to understand how a sponsoring military can use training and education programs to improve sponsored militaries' professional competence and capabilities. The primary research question is: How can the U.S. Army

develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership?

The primary research question requires answers to the following secondary research questions. These research questions will guide the research and ensure that the overall objectives of the research are met:

1. What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?
2. What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

Assumptions

The relevance of this research relies on certain assumptions to continue to gain an understanding of the situation. The researcher does not know if these are true but believes them to be true. In all cases possible, the researcher has attempted to verify or refute these assumptions. Finally, without making these assumptions, the research cannot continue.

1. Partnership with friendly nations will continue to be a critical national priority to achieve national interests in great power competition.
2. The United States will continue to perceive itself and shape its national policy around the concept that it is a global force for peace and a major global power with the responsibility to protect and defend democratic ideals abroad.
3. The United States will continue to rely on SFA as a critical method to build a network of partners to secure national interests. Security

cooperation will remain the method of choice for soft power projection across the globe.

4. A stable network of partners and allies is a highly effective means of establishing a conventional, credible threat-based deterrence strategy against major adversaries.

Definition of Terms

Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD) – This is a non-doctrinal term that is necessary for this research. When comparing Soviet and French attempts to develop partnered militaries, there will be several incongruencies in concepts. FSFD is meant to describe all activities, tasks, and operations with the purpose of building a partnered Foreign Security Force (FSF) capacity and capability. The term may include the core tasks of Security Force Assistance, Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel (PMO), and, when appropriate, Professional Military Education programs, such as establishing schools for an FSF. For the purposes of this research, using doctrinal terms such as Security Force Assistance, Foreign Internal Defense, or Professional Military Education would be insufficient in describing the range of activities in the two case studies.

Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel (PMO) – A concept in use by the French Army which can be compared to Security Force Assistance (See Figure 1). The critical difference is that PMO includes *partenariat de combat* (PC).

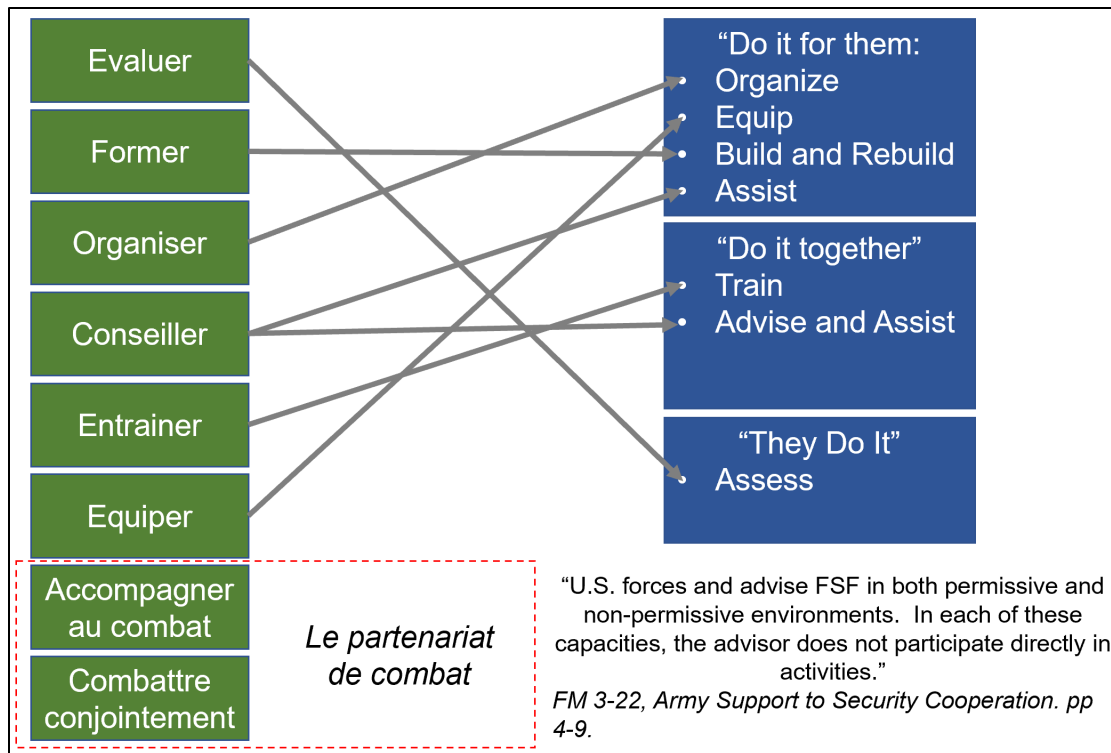


Figure 1. Comparison of Security Force Assistance and *Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel*

Source: Created by author.

Partenariat de combat (PC) – A French military concept nested within PMO. *Le partenariat de combat* consists of two of the eight actions within PMO: *l’accompagnement*, accompanying partners to the fight, and *les opérations de combat conjoint*, fighting alongside partners. PC is distinct from the U.S. definition of SFA in that it includes providing military support as well as directly sharing the risks of partners during their operations. In U.S. doctrine, once U.S. personnel participate in combat, it is no longer considered SFA.⁸

Programs, Practices, and Activities – A composite of all official military programs, individual or unit practices, and other activities conducted by a nation's military to develop the capacity and capability of a partnered FSF. The creation of this term is necessary to account for the different ways in which France, the USSR, and the United States conceive of and execute activities to develop partnered forces. The term "security cooperation" is inappropriate in this case because the U.S. joint definition of security cooperation specifies the whole-of-government approach to building partnered national capacity and capability.⁹ This term is necessary throughout the conduct of this research and should be understood to include tactics, techniques, and procedures as well as standard operating procedures, doctrine, integrated training and operations, Professional Military Education (PME), and all other activities executed primarily by the primary military force to develop the partnered force.

Security Force Assistance (SFA) – JP 3-20, *Security Cooperation* defines SFA as "the Department of Defense activities that support the development of the capacity and capability of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions."¹⁰ The critical point is the inherent responsibility to improve the capacity and capability of the partnered foreign security force. SFA is one operation available to execute Foreign Internal Defense (FID) up to but not including participation in combat. However, SFA is not a subordinate task of FID, as described below.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID) – "The participation by civilian agencies and military forces of a government or internal organization in any of the programs or activities taken by a host nation government to free and protect its society from... threats

to its security.”¹¹ FID is a term for the whole-of-government approach to supporting and defending a host nation from a threat. FID differs from SFA, which accomplishes more outside of the existence of a threat. While SFA is a tool that can be incorporated into a FID plan, SFA serves more purposes than just that.

Scope

This study intends to pull salient lessons learned from two historical case studies that are deliberately dissimilar. The intent is to explore what techniques overlap and which are wholly different. This study cannot and does not intend to argue for a wholesale modification or abandonment of current SFA doctrine. Nor does it intend to argue any merits or weaknesses in current or past U.S. military SFA operations. It will recommend research into additional subject areas if U.S. capability gaps emerge.

Furthermore, this study does not intend to debate the justifications, merits, or morality of any of the actions taken by parties in each case study. It will weigh actions based solely on their efficacy at achieving stated or perceived strategic objectives. At the completion of this study, the author will identify innovative approaches or ideas to incorporate into Army tactics, techniques and procedures, and doctrine after further research and testing.

Limitations and Delimitations

Conditions of the study limit its scope by time and length. The Command and General Staff School limits this study to nine months and below 125 pages.

The key delimitations of this study are in scope. The research only investigates two case studies of FSFD. The first, the Soviet training of the Afghan Army during the

Soviet-Afghan War, was chosen due to its apparent success and spatial proximity to recent American SFA operations. The Soviets succeeded in establishing a functioning communist state on their southern border for several years. The second case study is that of French operations in the Sahel; specifically, it investigates the effectiveness of the French concept of PMO through Operation Barkhane. No further cases are considered to limit the study due to time available for the study. These delimitations will reduce the scope of research and allow in-depth analysis of each subject.

Significance of the Study

As the United States reenters an era of Great Power competition, a whole-of-government approach is imperative to achieve lasting gains in its pursuit of national interests. The ability to develop and maintain a strong network of partners is critical to this approach, and the Army is the only service with the expertise and sustainment to develop FSF on a large scale. Army leaders have a vested interest in ensuring that the service is prepared to develop partner militaries that are competent, capable, committed, and confident.¹²

Summary

The U.S. Army has institutionalized its mission to conduct SFA to support national interests as outlined by the National Security Strategic Guidance, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy. However, experiences with advising and training partnered militaries have varied greatly and have not been aggregated into a reliable model for success. This study aimed to capitalize on international experience with training partnered militaries in developing nations through a

thorough study of experiences and lessons learned from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and France. It hoped to answer the primary question: How can the United States Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership?

The primary research question requires answers to the following secondary research questions. These research questions will guide the research and ensure that the overall objectives of the research are met:

1. What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?
2. What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

This study contributes to the continued planning and execution of security cooperation by leveraging and analyzing the experiences of others. International partnership is critical to achieving our national interests outlined in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and National Defense Strategy. The Army contributes to security cooperation through Security Force Assistance to ensure that the United States is the partner of choice.

¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, 2019), 3-1.

² Clifford J. Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 76-77.

³ HQDA, ADP 1, *The Army*, v.

⁴ Department of Defense (DoD), *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 9-10.

⁵ U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2021), 10.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ DoD, *National Defense Strategy*, 9-10.

⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Field Manual (FM) 3-22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, 2013), 4-9.

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-20, *Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2017), v.

¹⁰ Ibid., GL-6.

¹¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-22, *Foreign Internal Defense* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2021), ix.

¹² Ibid., 4-1.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This research project analyzed cases through the lens of the Joint Security Force Assistance (SFA) Imperatives as outlined by Joint Publication 3-20, *Security Cooperation*: Understand the Operating Environment (OE), Ensure Unity of Effort, Leadership, Support Legitimacy, Manage Information, Sustainability, and “Do no harm.”¹³ These imperatives have been chosen because of their supersession of the army principles stated in service doctrine. JP 3-20 states that these imperatives “enable SFA activities and have universal application for the numerous [security cooperation] activities and larger scale Service/joint operations and missions supported by SFA activities.”¹⁴ While this research focused on contributing to the army specifically, using joint terminology establishes a common language that will make any significant conclusions more widely applicable. The Joint SFA Imperatives will provide the framework to focus research on the primary research question: How can the U.S. Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership?

The primary research question requires answers to the following secondary research questions. These research questions guide the research and ensure that the overall objectives of the research are met:

1. What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

2. What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

This chapter analyzed the existing literature through this same framework to identify existing gaps or weaknesses in consideration that may further guide the research. It begins with a brief history of security force assistance and theoretical background of the Joint SFA Imperatives before reviewing key literature on the subject.

Background

What we now call security cooperation has existed throughout history. In small, pre-national societies such as kingdoms and city-states, the idea of training one's neighbor to fight must have seemed foolish. The anarchic systems of ancient Greece or medieval Europe were governed by pure realism, the international relations theory that states act in their rational self-interest while pursuing power to ensure self-preservation. In such a security environment, it was common for nations to join forces against a threat, only to find themselves at war shortly thereafter. The Treaty of Westphalia marked an essential step in the transition from a riotous status quo of authoritarian rulers constantly at war to international order. The treaty, a multinational accord in which societies agreed to respect each other's sovereignty, helped define the concept of a nation and set the stage for the modern liberal international order. Wars continued but were now organized within a framework that incentivized cooperation with select nations over seeking individual might.

Although training, equipping, and supporting foreign nations was common throughout the colonial era, it was often strictly between nations of similar cultures and

of similar strengths. For example, the French trained, equipped, and supported the American colonists, a similar European culture with shared interests. When cultures were significantly different, or one side was significantly stronger than the other, such as in Africa or Central Asia, colonial powers tended to conquer and absorb the force into their own. World War II saw one of the first modern attempts at security force assistance as the United States worked with Chinese Nationalists in the China-Burma-India theater. However, as has been the case in many instances of security force assistance, the United States treated the development of partnered militaries as an unofficial, secondary mission to be abandoned as soon as feasible. Throughout the early 1940s, the United States provided advisors to accomplish missions with and through the Chinese Nationalists mainly because the China-Burma-India theater was a lower priority than the European theater.¹⁵ SFA with the Chinese was based strictly on short-term military necessity instead of any commitment to a long-term partnership.

After the world wars re-shaped the globe and established the current rule-based international order, security force development became more relevant. Powerful nations began to increasingly assert power by leveraging partners and formal alliances instead of invading or conquering. Although the United States abandoned Chinese support after the Communist Revolution, this burgeoning ideological war made the development of South Korea that much more critical. Security force assistance was needed to defend the increasingly westernized Republic of Korea from the Communist threats of the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, and the Soviet Union.

Following the surrender of the Japanese and the end of World War II, the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAC) emerged as a necessity of the U.S. occupation. As the Army tried to set the conditions for Korean independence, they established a provisional military government that became the KMAC as control was handed over to local forces. The KMAC represents an example of security force assistance more closely resembling what the United States executes today and exhibited some of the characteristics seen in modern security force development, including language training (though they taught the Korean personnel English instead of learning Korean) and creating large units from core groups of smaller units.¹⁶

The dawn of the nuclear era also challenged the concept of *might makes right*. Nuclear weapons dramatically increased the risks associated with a heavy-handed military response to disagreements between states. Suddenly, mutually assured destruction meant that powerful nations had more to lose than to gain by going to war. Thus, competition shifted to proxy forces and advising. When the two most powerful nations were at odds with each other, it was in the world's best interests that they never go to war, and so nations renewed emphasis on partnerships and multinational treaties. Security cooperation, alliances, and partnerships allow a collection of states to maintain a balance of power multilaterally. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) opted to assemble a partnership through coercion and exploitation of smaller nations under the guise of equality, and the United States did so through a series of exclusive economic and defense agreements. The pinnacle of the western approach was the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

NATO is arguably the most successful example of security cooperation in history. Aside from its 72-year longevity, the organization has effectively maintained the key objectives of security cooperation, such as developing partnerships that enable nations to act in support of aligned objectives, providing stability, mitigating drivers of conflict, and assuring key partners and allies.¹⁷ NATO has enabled partner nations to carry out missions in lieu of, or alongside, U.S. forces and has supported U.S. military campaigns and contingency plans with necessary access, critical infrastructure, and partner nation support. Finally, NATO has achieved strategic objectives of security cooperation as stated in JP 3-20, *Security Cooperation* by “detering adversaries, preventing conflict, and enhancing the stability and security of [partner nations].”¹⁸ It led the transition to the global order and served as a bridge through which small, ideologically aligned nations could join in and gain support from the more traditional, major powers. NATO bridged the gap between the previous tendency of large, mutually respected nations to form alliances and assert dominance over smaller, client states. Whereas ancient city-states would never train their neighbors, due the risk of them turning on them someday, it was now in both the USSR and U.S.’ best interests to make their client nations as powerful as possible. Thus, security force assistance became a small but permanent tool of the U.S. Military.

During the Cold War, outside of the U.S. Special Forces, the Army still largely avoided accepting advising as a core mission. When the conflict in Vietnam needed significant security force assistance, the Army executed another ad hoc surge of military advisor capability with both conventional and unconventional forces. Here, the Army

faced the same challenges as they did in Europe, Burma, China, and Korea. The most critical of which became identifying the right people to serve as advisors. SFA is an inherently tricky job, and as a 1965 RAND Study stated: “To ensure strong motivation for the task, it would be well to place advisory service on a voluntary basis if at all possible.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the U.S. Army never found a perfect solution and failed to achieve its primary goal, a Vietnamese security force that could maintain control and prevail against the communists. The Army of the Republic of Vietnam collapsed within three years of the Paris Peace Accords.²⁰ While the Army kept key lessons in some doctrine, it moved on as quickly as possible to return to its “core mission.” The Army modernized its equipment, re-oriented to its existential threat in Soviet Russia, and adopted the doctrine of Air Land Battle. In 1991, the dramatic success of Operation Desert Storm only confirmed and entrenched the philosophy that the Army was for war only. Training foreign security forces was not a worthwhile endeavor.

Thus, the Army found itself in the Global War on Terror. A large-scale Army with no large-scale threat, the U.S. joint force had toppled the Taliban Regime in two months and the Hussein regime in three weeks.²¹ As in Vietnam, the United States proved superior at fighting an organized, traditional war but struggled to develop foreign security forces to ensure peace. Eventually, after experimenting with Mobile Training Teams, increasing the size of Special Forces, and reorganizing operational Brigade Combat Teams into Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs), the Army institutionalized the permanent SFABs under the direction of then Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Mark Milley.²²

The full history of developing foreign security forces is far vaster and more nuanced than can be related in this study. Each example expressed here is the subject of numerous academic works and theorists. It suffices to say that this research study took place in a context built and shaped around the iterative development of the current liberal international order. The United States' national interests are served by developing strong alliances and partnerships with like-minded nations. The Army contributes to these national interests not only by fighting in large scale combat operations, but by building and maintaining the capacity of partnered nations through developing their security forces.

The rest of this chapter addresses each of the seven Joint SFA Imperatives and reviews key literature. Sub-sections will first define and explain each imperative before explaining influential articles, schools of thought, and analysts on each subject with relation to both the French and the Soviet cases.

Understand the Operating Environment

Understanding the OE is fundamental to operations and [security cooperation], and essential to SFA activities... Identifying all actors influencing the environment and their motivations will help planners and practitioners define the goals and methods for developing [partner nation] security forces and their institutions. To prioritize and focus the SFA effort, it is equally important to understand the regional players and transnational actors who may influence the OE.²³

Joint doctrine states that Understanding the OE is “fundamental to operations and [security cooperation] and essential to SFA activities.”²⁴ A thorough understanding of the environment allows planners and practitioners of FSFD to define the most appropriate goals and methods for developing foreign security force and their institutions. On the

contrary, a poor understanding of the OE sets the conditions for misdiagnosed problems, poor goal setting and ultimate failure of the foreign security force's mission. While "understanding" is a broad term open to interpretation, an in-depth understanding of the OE should include the Foreign Security Force (FSF) itself, as well as the sociocultural factors of the Indigenous population and political, transnational, and informational factors.

Understanding the OE is fundamental to any military operation because the factors that affect those missions extend beyond the boundaries of the assigned area of operations.²⁵ The joint definition of the OE is understandably vague, describing it as a "composite of conditions, circumstances, and influences" which in any way affect the decisions of a commander.²⁶ In the arena of FSFD, these may include everything from geography to key leader personalities to tribal dialects. In the two cases selected for this study, the advising force builds an understanding of the operational environment in two general ways: through long-term, historical engagement between countries and through short-term, deliberate programs.

In both cases, the countries shared a long history with their partnered nations. After the Russian Revolution in 1919, Afghanistan was the first nation in the world to recognize the new government.²⁷ During the Soviet-Afghan war, a sudden explosion of scholarly work provides ample opportunity to study relationships between the two countries from 1919 to 1989. Douglas Borer, Associate Professor in the Department of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, wrote his master's thesis in 1988 and provided a research-based perspective of Soviet-Afghan history contemporary with the

case study. Of particular interest is Chapter 5, which detailed military relations to include several key aspects outside of the context of the conflict. Following World War II, Russia maintained a peculiar relationship with Afghanistan that ranged from friendship to disinterest. While the USSR was expanding its influence during the Cold War, Soviet leadership maintained relations with Afghanistan and provided long-term military training and sales but was generally disinterested in pursuing a full-fledged Soviet Socialist Republic prior to the invasion.²⁸

In the second case, a long shared colonial history has tied France to Africa. Because of French colonialism, many African nations and most militaries teach and speak French. This cultural tie enables small, tactical unit-level partnership that is distinct from operational, strategic, and national partnership encompassed within American security cooperation. These differences are manifest in the doctrine and concepts of Operational Military Partnership (PMO) as outlined in the 2021 study published by the *Centre Terre pour le partenariat militaire opérationnel (CPMO)*. The French Army is capable of thoroughly integrating with African units in part because they often share a language with partnered leaders.²⁹ This benefit does not come without costs and challenges. The colonial history of France and Africa engenders significant distrust of the French government and military presence in the Sahel, as is identified in numerous civilian academic and journalistic sources. The narrative of neo-colonialism, the belief that France is pursuing colonial exploitation of Africa without physical colonization, is significantly represented in studies and dialogues in the study.

Throughout military operations, the advising military makes efforts to build an understanding of the OE within the military and in the context of their operations. Again, here literature gives the opportunity to explore PME for partnered militaries. The USSR spent years before and during the conflict training Afghan military officers and Soldiers.³⁰ France shares a similar history of providing professional military training to African military personnel, but unlike the USSR case, it does not share a land border with its partnered militaries. This case provided an opportunity to explore some of the challenges faced when a client nation seeks to project power into a distant, friendly nation to develop a foreign security force.

Ensure Unity of Effort

The SFA effort may include multinational partners or an international organization. Effective command organizational and stakeholder relationships warrant special consideration... Unity of effort is imperative to successful SFA efforts... Regardless of the relationship, clear delineation and understanding of authorities is essential to avoid confusion.³¹

JP 3-20 recognizes that security force assistance does not happen in a vacuum, insulated from other activities. In all cases, one can expect that SFA or FSFD takes place in conjunction with or at least concurrently with other security cooperation activities. These activities can range from other military involvement with an FSF, non-governmental organizations conducting humanitarian assistance, competing countries attempting to conduct similar operations or even allied nations conducting similar, but not synchronized, FSFD. Acknowledging this, the doctrine states, “Unity of command is typically preferable, but often impractical... clear delineation and understanding of authorities is essential to avoid confusion.”³² Similar to understanding the OE, failing to

ensure unity of effort can lead to duplication of efforts, lost efficiency, and a slow financial cost that has detrimental second order effects in long-term operations.

Unity of effort refers to the coordination and synchronization of activities across multiple organizations to achieve a common purpose. This study focused primarily on the relationship and synchronization between the military and national-level decision-making. Secondly, in Africa, this study looked into the relationships between the military and the other instruments of national power to include nongovernmental organizations and other civilian organizations. Whereas the authoritarian nature of the USSR limited widespread public dissent against national policy for much of the Soviet-Afghan war, modern democracies such as France are required to work with and navigate through the information environment to achieve their national objectives.

One key source for this research is *Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*. Written by political scientist and professor Olivier Roy in 1991 during the dissolution of the USSR, Roy analyzed the war through a series of different lenses to include: historical and social background, analytical history of the war, relations between Moscow and Kabul, external forces, lessons of the war, Afghan politics and society, and prospects for the future. During his analysis, he identified several disconnects between Soviet intent and lived Afghan experience. His work relied heavily on an Afghan perspective, which when juxtaposed to studies of the Soviet experience, identified several disconnects between Soviet intent and lived Afghan experience that can give insights into building and maintaining unity of effort. The purpose of his document was to analyze the recent history of the war and its aftermath with the ultimate intent of learning from Soviet

mistakes and understanding the way ahead for Central Asia. His audience is “the student of East-West confrontation” or “those interested in Moscow’s reassessment of its third-world strategy and of perestroika.”³³ Other critical authors writing more recently include Olga Oliker’s 2011 RAND study *Building Afghanistan’s Security Forces in Wartime: The Soviet Experience*, and Artemy Kalinovsky’s 2010 work for the Cold War International History Project, “The Blind Leading the Blind: Soviet Advisors, Counter-Insurgency and Nation-building in Afghanistan.” Both works identify significant impediments to ensuring unity of effort to include insufficient training for political advisors and stove-piped chains of command between Soviet organizations.

As mentioned above, dissenting or challenging opinions were particularly useful in studying the complex issue of maintaining unity of effort in the 21st century. One source of interest is an article written for the *International Journal of Security and Development* by Isaline Bergamaschi, a political scientist working at the time as an Assistant Professor at *Universidad de Los Andes*. In her article “French Military Intervention in Mali: Inevitable, Consensual yet Insufficient,” she offered an account of France’s actions in the country in 2013. She analyzed the events leading up to the end of the northern and southern crises and to the increased conflict between the government and rebel forces. She argued that although the French intervention was framed as inevitable and based on broad consensus, it will be insufficient to address the root sociopolitical causes of Mali’s multidimensional crisis. This is a secondary source in which the author demonstrated some biases against governments and militaries of Mali in general and is therefore critical to this research project. Bergamaschi provided a window

into the non-military perception of French advising in Africa and of Operation Serval. Since this action in Mali led to the development of PMO, this provided useful perspective when analyzing the success of Operation Barkhane.

In both cases, meaningful insight into this SFA Imperative required a synthesis of multiple sources. Projects and writing on the subjects tended to focus on individual organizations and their efforts. However, mutual support between organizations is the key to achieving unity of effort. Left unanswered, was the question of efficacy. While it is clear that a lack of unity of effort prevents success, it is less clear how much unity is needed to achieve it. Further study will be needed to determine the limits of unity of effort.

Leadership

Leadership is especially important in the inherently dynamic and complex environment associated with SFA... Leadership must fully comprehend the OE and be prepared, fully involved, and supportive for SFA activities to succeed. Productive SFA requires leadership on both the provider and the recipient sides throughout the operation or campaign.³⁴

Leadership, though common throughout military doctrine to the point of near contriteness, takes on a more nuanced and specific definition in SFA. In addition to the standard army definition of “influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization,”³⁵ leadership in SFA includes American leadership of American soldiers, American leadership of FSF, and FSF leadership of FSF. In short, it is imperative that SFA develops the leadership capabilities of the FSF both at an individual and organizational level. This means both training and developing leaders, but also, advising and developing FSF leader

development organizations, practices and policies.³⁶ Specifically, JP 3-20 states that SFA requires regular interaction of trainers/advisors and trainees from the tactical level to the strategic level, and that leadership must “fully comprehend the OE and be prepared, fully involved, and supportive for SFA activities to succeed.”³⁷ When researching these two cases, the researcher paid special attention to examples individual leadership, deliberate leadership training, and the public opinions of key leaders on the SFA effort.

Research of this imperative was frustrated by a dearth of attributable analysis of FSF leaders at the tactical level. This is likely an unfortunate result of the sources chosen. While tactical leaders of any nation rarely achieve the same level of recognition as strategic military leaders, this is even more so the case for FSF tactical leaders. Most of the scholarly works used in this study are written with a heavy focus on the advising nation or directly from the advising nation’s perspective. Nevertheless, several first-hand accounts battles, after-action reviews, and news articles provide enough information to infer lessons learned in several cases.

Overall, the SFA Imperative leadership underlines the criticality of individual attributes and behaviors during Security Force Assistance. National programs and national interests are ultimately executed by two individuals on the ground working together. The joint publication specifically emphasizes the need for leadership on both sides of SFA, that is, the assisting and assisted individual. Generally, this study analyzed sources for key leader attributes and behaviors that advance or inhibit the goals of FSFD.

Some key resources in this realm are the assessments and after-action reviews provided by the French Military. This research analyzed some of the key lessons learned

provided by operations in the Sahel as provided by the CPMO. Of particular importance is the 2021 CPMO study. Since France conducted PMO throughout the Sahel region, they have been able to test each of these theories and draw out lessons learned one by one. The CPMO study is organized into three sections 1) Combat Partnership: Theory, 2) Examples comparing real engagements in combat partnership, and 3) What lessons are learned?³⁸ This product provided an official framework of lessons learned that research augments with additional unpublished after-action reviews from Operation Barkhane.

In the Russian case, this research focused primarily on key organizational leaders and their contribution to developing the Afghan army. Due to the particular interest around the Soviet-Afghan experience entrenched by the Cold War and the subsequent revitalization of said interest during Operation Enduring Freedom, an extensive body of knowledge is accessible analyzing individual military and political leaders on the Soviet and Afghan sides. Professor Emeritus at Australian National University William Maley's *The Afghanistan Wars* provided insights into the actions and personalities of key political figures such as Leonid Brezhnev and Babrak Karmal. In addition, Dr. Lester Grau's years of expertise and numerous writings on Soviet training, tactics, and leadership in the Soviet-Afghan War proved invaluable to understanding the Soviet security force development model, challenges, and successes. His works such as *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Tactics in Afghanistan* and "The Soviet-Afghan War: A Superpower Mired in the Mountains" provided the critical tactical perspective needed to assess Soviet and Afghan leadership in the Soviet case.

Support Legitimacy

SFA develops FSF that should contribute to the legitimate governance of the [partner nation] population. This is done by developing FSF that are competent, capable, committed, and confident, not only in the eyes of the U.S., other countries, and [partner nation] governments, but more critically, in the eyes of the partner nation] population.³⁹

This imperative to support legitimacy links SFA to long-term, non-military goals of security cooperation. JP 3-20 states that SFA activities should ultimately create FSF that contributes to and enhances the legitimate governance of the partnered nation.⁴⁰ To accomplish this, security force advisors focus on developing the military. However, in many nations, the lines between the military, police, and government are dynamic and blurred. This imperative acknowledges that an advising military force cannot be successful without acknowledging and accepting that they must develop all aspects of the partnered nation's governance, not only its military capabilities. As one of the more nuanced SFA Imperatives, JP 3-20 subdivides Support Legitimacy into "legitimacy of the [partner nation] government and of the forces providing SFA"⁴¹ and policing.

Supporting the legitimacy of the partner nation's government and the advising forces includes: ensuring partnered nation security policies and practices are founded upon the rule of law; ensuring FSF operate lawfully, respect human rights and support efforts to establish and support the rule of law; and supporting partnered nation ownership in the SFA effort.⁴² Furthermore, SFA should "put a [partner nation] face on all forms of success and positive reinforcement and properly mitigate ant negatives, so the FSF appears righteous even when mistakes are made."⁴³ The challenge of legitimacy lies in the requirement that an advising force simultaneously try to build an FSF that the

local population trusts and make sure that that FSF earns the trust through their own behavior.

Supporting policing and the justice system is a common example of how a patron nation military may step outside of the military instrument of national power during SFA. JP 3-20 acknowledges the critical role of policing and the justice system in supporting the legitimacy of the partnered nation. In nations that maintain a national police force or gendarmerie, the police are formally and inseparably part of the FSF. For assistance to be effective, all parts of the security force and governing body should work in concert to build the legitimacy of the state. SFA for policing and rule of law includes: establishing accountability and oversight mechanisms; direct collaboration with civil society to prevent abuses of power and corruption; and assistance with civil as well as criminal justice reform. Additionally, the joint publication acknowledges that this is a complex issue and that legitimacy is often difficult to measure objectively.⁴⁴

Supporting legitimate governance of the population acknowledges that in cases of FSFD, the advising force is trying to build the capacity and capability of a partnered force. Without consistent, deliberate, and effective methods of supporting a legitimate government, the advising force becomes an occupying force and has no discernible pathway to success. This imperative is one of the most difficult to accomplish because the critical audience is the civilian population of the partnered nation. This study analyzed these cases from two perspectives. First, it identified actions taken to build legitimacy and their effectiveness; then, it identified unintended actions that enhance or erode legitimacy.

Again, the CPMO provided insight into supporting legitimacy. As a military document, it directly identified the importance of building the legitimacy of the partnered force and specifically mentions key lessons learned from a military perspective. This analysis also relied on multiple secondary sources surrounding operations in the Sahel region. Because operations are recent and ongoing, there are sufficient news articles, opinion pieces, and other non-military documents that provided a civilian perspective. The study identified gaps between the military's perceived efficacy and the opinions of the civilian population.

Additional resources, including Oliker's RAND study, outlined lessons learned and gaps in the legitimacy of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). Key insights identified the extent to which the USSR attempted to support the legitimacy of the DRA and how effective these efforts were. Of particular interest is the difference in perceptions of the government between the urban and rural populations of Afghanistan.

Manage Information

Information is a powerful enabler and weapon in the complex and dynamic OE normally involving SFA activities. Forces conducting SFA are integrated as part of the overarching operation or campaign (e.g., FID[Foreign Internal Defense], COIN [Counterinsurgency], or stability activities), but they may be physically separated through distributed operations with FSF... Coordination of the information themes and messages among the U.S., FSF, and the [partner nation] government, and the presentation or availability of information to the indigenous population can limit or mitigate the propaganda efforts of insurgents or hostile forces. This may serve to mitigate the potential for destabilizing influences of hostile forces or criminal elements to propagandize SFA efforts and damage the [partner nation] government's credibility and legitimacy.⁴⁵

Managing information is closely tied to legitimacy. In today's increasingly dynamic and fast-paced OE, information is becoming an increasingly consequential

instrument of national power. In the context of SFA, managing information focuses on developing a thoroughly integrated and coordinated information management plan with military and non-military entities in security cooperation. Specifically, JP 3-20 emphasizes the development of the information plan “in coordination with interagency partners, whether through a country team, a joint force, or component headquarters.”⁴⁶ This emphasis stems from the challenges inherent in SFA of operating dispersed across vast distances. According to this doctrine, the patron nation force should work to give “positive context and narrative”⁴⁷ to the FSF actions and the SFA effort. This effort ultimately should effectively counter propaganda efforts of insurgents or hostile forces. It also may help to mitigate destabilizing influences of adversarial or criminal elements to damage the partner’s governmental legitimacy.

Managing information is an imperative that continues to grow in complexity and importance. The key comparison of this research studied the differences in the effects of information between the two cases. The research focused on how Soviet domestic and international propaganda efforts affected FSFD and the performance of the Afghan military. The research identified information efforts surrounding the Soviet-Afghan conflict and analyze their effects on the political and military decisions regarding FSFD.

Some key sources in this realm included translated primary sources or analyses of Russian-language histories to include works by Aleksandr Lyakhovsky and Dr. Lester Grau’s work, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*. In-depth research of Soviet and international sources was required to draw correlations between information and operations. This research was particularly challenging when studying a

historical event from a time with a far more active and responsive information environment than exists today.

As managing information is now fully recognized as essential to developing FSF, the French military demonstrates more deliberate planning. Research in this area focused on formal communications, such as press releases and public affairs, as well as the subsequent reactions and opinions of media organizations. A key example was the “press pack” released by the French Army covering Operation Barkhane. These packs are typically released in an attempt to give media outlets an overview of a situation, shape the narrative by providing the government’s point of view, and simplify subsequent press conferences by getting everyone “on the same page.”⁴⁸ The Public Relations Office of the *Etat-Major des Armées* (Army Staff) prepared and published this document to provide an overview of the purpose, organization, and results of missions as part of Operation Barkhane. It showed how the international agreements forming the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) came together and indicates in broad detail where and how French Forces have participated. It also underlined the needs behind PMO without giving much detail on the process and emphasizes the greater benefits of military operations such as medical and equipment support. Outside of the military perspective, the study focused only on several sources that provided insight into the civilian population’s understanding and engagement with the information environment. Several news sources were used to frame and color various populations’ views on French operations and of France’s intentions in Africa. The study

limited the scope of this research by drawing clear connections between deliberate attempts to manage information for a purpose and their effectiveness.

Sustainability

Sustainability consists of two major components: the ability of the U.S. and other partners to sustain the SFA activities successfully through all phases of the operation or campaign and the ability of [partner nation] security forces to sustain their capabilities independently over the long term. The first component may be predicated on the [partner nation] maintaining legitimacy while the second component should be considered holistically when working with the [partner nation] to build their security forces...⁴⁹

This imperative refers to both the partnered nation and the patron nation. The partnered nation achieves sustainability when it can maintain its capabilities independently in the long term. The partner nation's success may be determined by factors such as governance, popular support, or military victory. Patron nation sustainability refers to its ability to sustain SFA activities through all phases of the operation or campaign. The patron nation's success may be predicated on the success and action of the partnered nation or based on domestic support for the operation outside the control of the military. These two forms of sustainability are impacted by critical factors: the political will of the advising nation to remain engaged with the partnered nation and the military effectiveness of the partnered nation's security force.

Several papers by Dr. Lester Grau, such as "Khost in the Rearview Mirror: First City in Afghanistan Falls to Jalaludin Haqanni, the Pakistani ISI and the Inadequacies of Aerial Resupply," provided critical insights into the performance of the Afghan Army during and after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. These tactical analyses build to the larger assessments of the political pressures facing Russian leaders regarding the level

of support provided to Afghanistan after withdrawal. Research in this area examined the link between Boris Yeltsin's decision to end support to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the military defeat of the Afghan Army.

An analysis of PMO can begin with "Le Partenariat militaire opérationnel aujourd'hui," written by Colonel Alain Vidal of the CPMO. In his article, written for *Brennus 4.0*, a professional military magazine, he wrote to inform and convince the French army on the idea of PMO. The PMO concept, unlike any other studied, acknowledges upfront the relative permanence of military partnership. Colonel Vidal's piece outlined what he calls the "French touch," explaining that their commitment to partnership and advising down to the lowest level in all operational units will be their key to success.⁵⁰ He wrote this work early in the establishment of the CPMO and he gave some synopsis of the theories of PMO without yet having the practical experience of the 2021 CPMO Study. The research focused on how the formal acknowledgment of this extended timeline affects the political will of the French Government to continue operations. Additionally, research analyzed how this acknowledge permanence affects the efficacy of the partnered nations, seeking to discover if it benefits the partnered nation to know that France will remain engaged or if it inhibits their development, reducing their need to improve. During this research project, the Republic of France made the decision to end Operation Barkhane and significantly withdraw from Mali. Implications of this decision were outside the scope of this research project but warrant further study.

"Do No Harm"

In complex operations, SFA, as part of a unified action by the [United States Government], can become a part of the conflict dynamic serving either to increase

or reduce tension. As with any activity that involves changes to the status quo, and risks, SFA planners and trainers/advisors must be sensitive to and maintain an awareness for adverse effects in the security sector and on the local population and community institutions and structures... A shared understanding of the security sector for which change is sought, and the actual needs that exist, are prerequisites for the success of any SFA activity, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any harmful effects. Practitioners should conduct a complete assessment prior to implementation.⁵¹

The final SFA Imperative in JP 3-20 attempts to account for the remaining, highly complex nature of the mission. While the first six imperatives outline what and advising force should do, this focuses on what they must not do. The term *do no harm* acknowledges that SFA is often a single piece of unified action by the government. As a player in the larger operation, it is imperative for advisors to understand that their actions have secondary and tertiary effects on the environment and can change conditions for other government entities. To manage this, advisor should periodically assess and collaborate with interagency partners, maintain situational awareness of operations in the OE, and be prepared to adjust SFA activities to support joint operations and security cooperation activities. This is perhaps the most challenging imperative as it recognizes that what is best for the FSF or the SFA effort, may not be the best course of action for security cooperation as a whole. Underlining the criticality of maintaining this understanding, the joint publication states “shared understanding of the security sector for which change is sought, and the actual needs that exist, are prerequisites for the success of any SFA activity, and to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any harmful effects.”⁵² While seemingly ambiguous, this imperative is meant to establish a frame of mind for approaching SFA, not to prescribe actions.

The joint publication only vaguely defined the concept of do no harm.⁵³ It emphasizes the fact that SFA is a fragile system of systems. Every SFA operation's success is reliant on the synchronized success of every other operation. In this study, research identified events, operations, and actions that ran counter to the overall mission in each case. This section relied heavily upon after-action reports and lessons learned from primary and secondary sources.⁵⁴

Summary

This research project analyzed cases through the lens of the Joint Security Force Assistance Imperatives as outlined by JP 3-20. Understanding the OE consists of both long-term interactions between countries and deliberate attempts that militaries make to understand their operational area. Ensuring Unity of Effort requires military and non-military leadership to communicate and guide actions toward shared goals. Leadership refers to the critical role that individual leadership of both partnered forces plays in ensuring successful FSFD. Supporting legitimacy is foundational to all FSFD activities because it sets the conditions for partnered security forces' success. Managing information is increasingly challenging in liberal democratic societies in the modern age of mass communication. FSFD must be able to sustain both the national will of the advising nation as well as the long-term military viability of the partnered force. Finally, all FSFD operations must support each other and avoid causing unnecessary tension within the OE. Literature on both cases is wide-ranging in both scope, detail, and purpose.

The current body of knowledge analyzed each case from a specific lens. Analysis on Russia focused primarily on the military challenges of the Soviet-Afghan war and is generally differentiated between pre and post Global War on Terror lines. The majority of literature written after the Global War on Terror analyzed the Soviet-Afghan war in comparison to Operation Enduring Freedom. Literature on PMO also often compared the theories to American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. None of the literature sought to evaluate either study in the context of contemporary joint doctrine as will this study. Furthermore, while many contributions to the field sought to extract lessons from either case, this study provided clear, actionable recommendations for current Army doctrine.

¹³ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3 to B-5.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Joseph G.D. Babb, “The Harmony of Yin and Yang: The American Military Advisory Effort in China, 1941-1951,” (Ph.D., diss., University of Kansas, 2012), 210.

¹⁶ John D. Tabb, “Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG): A Model for Success?” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2010), 20.

¹⁷ JCS, JP 3-20, I-2.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ G. C. Hickey, *The American Military Advisor and his Foreign Counterpart: The Case of Vietnam*, RM-4482-ARPA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1965), xii.

²⁰ Stephen T. Hosmer, Konrad Kellen, Brian M. Jenkins, *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by the Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders*, R-2208-OSD (HIST) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1978), 126.

²¹ Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, *Afghanistan: Post Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for

Congress RL30588 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2017), 7; “The Iraq War,” Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/iraq-war>.

²² Brian Hamilton, “Army Moves Closer to Establishing First Security Force Assistance Brigade,” U.S. Army, May 18, 2017, https://www.army.mil/article/187991/army_moves_closer_to_establishing_first_security_force_assistance_brigade.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3.

²⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), IV-1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Douglas A. Borer, “Soviet Foreign Policy toward Afghanistan 1919-1988,” (Masters Thesis, The University of Montana, 1988).

²⁸ Olivier Roy, *Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War* (Oxford: Nuttfield Press Ltd., 1991)

²⁹ Le Centre Terre pour le Partenariat Militaire Opérationnel (CPMO), *Partenariat de combat: Etude comparée entre l’engagement réel et les modèles théorétiques*, trans. Daniel Dillenback (Paris, FR : CPMO, 2021).

³⁰ Borer, “Soviet Foreign Policy toward Afghanistan 1919-1988.”

³¹ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3.

³² Ibid.

³³ Roy, *Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, i.

³⁴ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3.

³⁵ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, 2019) 1-13.

³⁶ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ CPMO, *Partenariat de combat*, 1.

³⁹ JCS, JP 3-20, B-4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ministère des Armées, “Press Pack: Operation Barkhane,” accessed October 20, 2021, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/content/download/577214/9871585/20200212_NP_EMA%20CABCOM_DP%.20BARKHANE_EN.pdf.

⁴⁹ JCS, JP 3-20, B-5.

⁵⁰ Alain Vidal, “Le partenariat militaire opérationnel aujourd’hui,” *Brennus 4.0*, trans. Daniel Dillenback, April 2019, https://www.penseemiliterre.fr/en/ressources/30114/50/le-pmo_col-vidal.pdf.

⁵¹ JCS, JP 3-20, B-5.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the intended research methodology for this study. The methodology is chosen based on the necessity for this thesis to answer the primary research question: How can the U.S. Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership? Additionally, the research methodology is intended to answer the following secondary research questions:

1. What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?
2. What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

Furthermore, this chapter explains data collection methods, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Method

This project utilized a historical qualitative case study approach to compare two different instances of FSFD. Case studies will include the Soviet Union's development and partnership with the Afghan Army to fight the Mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan War and the modern application of French Operational Military Partnership (PMO) in and around the Sahel region of Africa. No U.S. cases were chosen because the purpose of this study was to learn lessons specifically from non-U.S. experiences. The Soviet case was chosen based on its spatial proximity to recent U.S. operations. While more than 40

years have passed since the Soviet-Afghan War, the Soviets faced a problem very similar to the United States and therefore, this case provided significant opportunities to compare the Soviet and U.S. experiences. The French case provided an ideal opportunity to study contemporary operations from a similarly equipped force. The French Army is similarly organized, shares similar values, and is an enduring ally and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partner. To use strategic terminology, the French case uses similar means in a different way to achieve a similar end. This project considers no further cases to remain within the limitations outlined in Chapter 1. This methodology is most appropriate given the scope of the project and research questions. It provides limited breadth but sufficient depth into two cases and will effectively accomplish the purpose of this study: to draw new lessons learned outside of the context of U.S. operations. See Figure 2 for a graphic representation of the methodology.

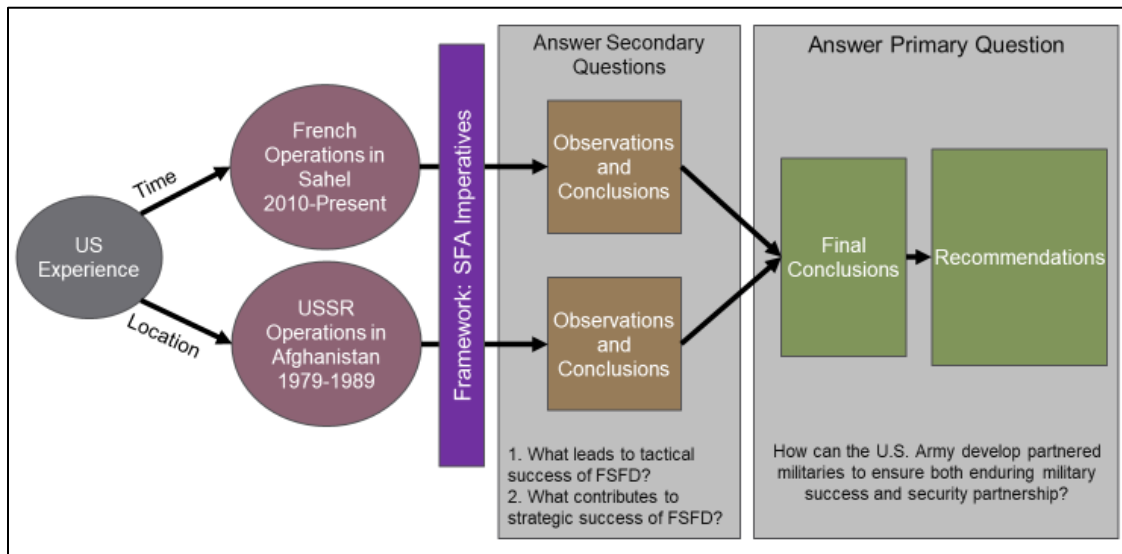


Figure 2. Research Methodology Visual Model

Source: Created by author.

Data Collection

This study relied on unclassified, open-source information as well as some military documents that contain Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI). In addition, some French military documents provided are considered *Diffusion Restreint*, which is analogous to CUI. In all cases, the research keeps the information in this thesis at the unclassified level.

This study analyzes these cases using the primary and secondary sources including those specifically mentioned in Chapter 2, with additional cited tertiary sources used for context and background investigation. Criteria and tools created for this research study are presented in Appendix A. The researcher identified key terms and observations using the definitions and descriptions of the Joint SFA Imperatives in Appendix B of JP 3-20. Figures 4, 5 and 6 depict the logical flow of this process translating the complete descriptions of each Joint SFA Imperative into an operationalized term for data collection. Solid lines depicted in bold denote that the core concept directly led to the development of the operationalized term. Additional relationships have been removed for simplicity. Twenty-five operationalized terms were identified and subsequently grouped into five core areas. As depicted in Figure 4, each term has a numerical identifier for ease of reference. The data collection process is summarized as follows:

1. Establish a data collection table for each source studied (see Figure 3).
2. Study source in depth, record observations on data collection table while tagging each observation with relevant operationalized terms and core areas.
3. Focus on data collection without analysis to ensure consistency and impartiality during research. Data collection may include initial thoughts or

references in the “notes” column but does not incorporate any analysis across sources until the collection is complete.

4. When all sources have been analyzed, move on to data analysis.

Data Analysis

The study analyzed these cases against the framework of SFA Imperatives as outlined in JP 3-20 to relate insights to U.S. operations effectively.⁵⁵ The Joint SFA Imperatives are: Understand the Operating Environment, Ensure Unity of Effort, Leadership, Support Legitimacy, Manage Information, Sustainability, and Do No Harm. These imperatives differ slightly from the Army’s SFA Imperatives outlined in Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-07.10, *Multi-service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Advising Foreign Security Forces*.⁵⁶ This study focused on the Joint Imperatives due to their broader nature and supersession of the Imperatives outlined in the ATP. The data analysis phase is summarized as follows:

1. Holistic analysis. The researcher began with an initial assessment of overall lessons learned throughout the process prior to further data analysis.
2. Individual case data analysis #1. Combined all data collection tables from the first case onto a single spreadsheet. Organized data by the tags gathered during data collection. Recorded patterns and observations. Answered secondary research questions.
3. Individual case data analysis #2. Repeated process for case #2.
4. Combined case analysis. Combined data collection tables from both studies into a single spreadsheet. Organized data by tags gathered during data

collection. Recorded patterns and observations. Answered primary research question.

5. Comparison to U.S. Doctrine. Compared outcomes of data analysis to current U.S. Army and Joint doctrine. Identified gaps, incongruencies and make recommendations for changes or for further research.

Ethical Considerations

This study did not collect data from individuals. However, in the case of studying French operations, some documents candidly detailed positive and negative experiences working with individual partnered nation security forces. There is a significant potential for embarrassment or degradation in partnerships if a nation's active security force is portrayed negatively. To mitigate this concern, the researcher opted to study French operations across the Sahel region of Africa instead of on an individual country. Additionally, this research study limited references to specific dates and locations whenever possible. Published work does not identify some countries by name and the researcher modified or omitted inconsequential information where appropriate to prevent identification of the country discussed.

Summary

A historical case study was the most effective research methodology for this project. It allowed the research to draw specific and general lessons learned and observations from primary and secondary sources that answered the primary and secondary research questions. The methodology sufficiently limited the scope of the research project in a way that maximized the use of available information within the

necessary limitations and delimitations identified in chapter one. By screening observations through the secondary research questions, analyzing them independently, then analyzing them in aggregate, the research provided valid and useful insights for consideration.

⁵⁵ JCS, JP 3-20, B-3 to B-5.

⁵⁶ Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-07.10, *Multi-service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Advising Foreign Security Forces* (Washington, DC: Army Publishing Directorate, 2017), 33.

CHAPTER 4

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

SFA activities strive to create FSF that are competent, capable, sustainable, committed, confident, and support the security of the [partner nation] and regional stability. The following imperatives enable SFA activities and have universal application for the numerous [security cooperation] activities and larger-scale Service/joint operations and missions supported by SFA activities.

–Joint Chiefs of Staff, JP 3-20, *Security Cooperation*

Introduction

Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the observations and challenges identified during the study of the two cases. This chapter uses the Joint Security Force Assistance (SFA) Imperatives as a framework to organize and explore the case observations and to put them into a comparative context with each other and the U.S. Military's current joint doctrine. The resultant conclusion seeks to improve American military theory and doctrine and answer the secondary research questions. This chapter addresses each of the seven Joint SFA Imperatives as they relate to the chosen cases. After presenting major observations on each case within the framework, it aggregates the observations to draw comparisons from both cases.

Data collection tables were built and analyzed in accordance with the methodology and the researcher drew lessons learned to answer the primary research question: How can the U.S. Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership? In order to answer the primary research question, the researcher first analyzed the two selected cases to answer the supporting secondary research questions:

1. What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?
2. What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

Case 1: The Republic of France in the Sahel

France has a long and complex relationship with Africa that directly impacts its operations today. After the end of World War II, the French Empire contained approximately 1.8 million square miles consisting of present-day Ivory Coast, Benin, Mali, Guinea, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Togo, and Nigeria.⁵⁷ As France withdrew from Africa during the era of decolonization, they maintained and established formal diplomatic, economic and military ties creating a network of close relations that is often referred to as *françafrique*.⁵⁸ President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast first coined the term to describe his country's close diplomatic ties with France.⁵⁹ However, it has since become controversial and is used to criticize perceived corrupt and surreptitious activities of France and various African nations.⁶⁰ Regardless of the definition of the term, this history and controversy has continued to shape and color France's military actions in the Sahel and various perceptions thereof.

The recent history of French operations in the Sahel region of Africa is dominated by two major operations: Operation Serval, the roughly 18-month operation to defeat Islamic jihadist militants in northern Mali and its successor, Operation Barkhane. Operation Serval followed a request from the Malian Government and a United Nations Security Council resolution and consisted primarily of French and Chadian operations

against jihadists in Northern Mali.⁶¹ Operation Barkhane later consolidated those efforts with numerous other operations in the Sahel region in 2014 to enable synchronization, address the cross-border element of the threat, and shift the focus of operations to foreign security force development.⁶² Although France had a long and complex history of operating with African countries post-colonialism, Operation Serval marks the beginning of the focus of this study due to the lessons learned and shift in military objective from defeat of jihadist forces to FSFD.

The most noteworthy example of FSFD in Africa prior to Operation Serval is France's assistance to Chad during the last major rebel attacks in 2008 and 2009.⁶³ Afterward, during a period of relative peace, France supported a consolidation of Chadian military forces under Idriss Déby. Christopher Griffin, a researcher for The Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, explained the relationship in his article for *Small Wars and Insurgencies*.

France is interested in Chad for its central location, which allows the French Army to maneuver between its other bases on the continent and respond quickly to crises. The military assistance treaty with Chad (there is no mutual defense treaty) provides for French military personnel in Chadian uniforms to train the Chadian Army. France also committed to provide military equipment (both free and paid), maintenance for that equipment, and logistical support. In exchange, the Chadian government gives France the right to use its airspace and its airfields for military and civil flights. Most of the military assistance treaties with the other Francophone countries have virtually the same terms.⁶⁴

Griffin and others argue that France's relationship with Chad has been the most successful of francophone nations. Although Chad still faces domestic challenges with alleged authoritarianism and human rights abuses, it has become undeniably a regional power.⁶⁵ In fact, Chad was the only African nation that was both willing and able to support France in combat during Operation Serval substantively.⁶⁶ However, it is difficult

to argue that this partnership will continue along a similar trajectory since Déby's death in April, 2021.⁶⁷ Chad is only one example of many partnered operations in Africa prior to Operation Serval.

When Operation Serval began in January 2013, its objectives were entirely enemy-focused. Islamist forces had recently seized Konna and had placed themselves within striking distance of the capital Bamako.⁶⁸ And although France's policy was to avoid unilateral intervention, they decided not to wait for the European Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assemble a multinational force. President Hollande announced that the military objectives of French intervention were to stop the terrorist aggression, secure a country in which there are many thousand French people, and permit Mali to recover its territorial integrity.⁶⁹ France initially saw its intervention as an emergency military stop gap, to prevent the fall of the Malian government and give ECOWAS time to assemble a force sufficient to execute further operations.⁷⁰ Similar to America's invasion of Iraq, France was quickly victorious, and found itself unexpectedly thrust into FSFD.

In 2014, France consolidated its numerous operations under one command. The new operation, called Barkhane sought to address the cross-border dimension of the terrorist threat, and focus military efforts on partnership.⁷¹ In a 2020 English-language press release, the French Armed Forces Headquarters stated that Operation Barkhane's approach was meant to support partner nations' armed forces in the Sahel-Saharan Strip, strengthen coordination between international military forces, and prevent the re-establishment of safe havens for terrorists in the region.⁷² Since 2014, France has learned

and adapted new theories and best practices for what they call Operational Military Partnership (PMO). They have adapted their already expeditionary military culture and tend to see themselves as uniquely suited for FSFD.

Sources ranged from internal After-Action Reviews published by the French Army to think tank studies of French operations and published works from journalists who covered the Sahel region. The diversity of sources allowed the researcher to look for common observations various perspectives and mitigate bias within each source. This section is sub-divided to present the data by SFA Imperative.

Understand the Operational Environment

Situational understanding was a significant theme throughout, and generally fell into one of three categories: the French pre-disposition to cultural understanding in Africa, the French expeditionary military culture, and tactical commanders' understanding of their operational environment.

The French have an enduring pre-disposition to cultural understanding in Africa. While difficult to quantify, it was articulated in both military and non-military sources using terms such as the “French touch,” “savoir-faire” and “savoir-être.”⁷³ Most sources agree that this shared culture is chiefly the result of the long colonial history of France in West Africa. The French established their first trading posts in Senegal in 1624, and in the colonial era that followed French language and culture spread throughout their colonial holdings. Today, French is an official language of 19 countries on the continent. While this pre-disposition is defined and framed in cultural terms, the formal agreements and relations developed during and following decolonialization in the 20th century are

the rigid scaffolding of France's understanding of the operational environment. These ties, though often controversial due to their origin in colonialism and the slave trade, have remained relatively unbroken for over 200 years. These relationships have led to an institutional understanding and expertise in the region, as all French Army units at one point rotated through Africa on four-month "short duration missions," contributing to the growth of France's expeditionary mindset.⁷⁴

The long-standing expeditionary culture of the French Army significantly contributes to its understanding of the operational environment as well. Formal expeditionary units such as the "*troupes de marines*" and the Foreign Legion, regular units with long-standing expeditionary missions and cultures shape the greater understanding of the French military.⁷⁵ These units were formally separated from the non-expeditionary, partially-conscripted continental forces until 1996, when France began the transition to an all-volunteer force.⁷⁶ The entire French Army adopted this expeditionary culture and gained combat and deployment experience in Africa, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Balkans. This experience shaped and developed an expeditionary mentality and culture of make-do, called *systeme debrouille*, which roughly translates to "resourcefulness."⁷⁷ This mindset appears to enable tactical commanders' understanding of the operational environment. French commanders have generally been comfortable operating in ambiguous situations with multiple actors. As Shurkin pointed out in a 2014 RAND study: "France owes its success in Northern Mali... in part to the practice of commanders and administrators attending to local politics and the human

terrain.”⁷⁸ French forces historically maintain a useful understanding of whom to trust, whom to promote and whom to push aside.⁷⁹

Finally, one of the most significant factors in developing and maintaining their understanding of the operational environment is the shared language between French Soldiers and their partners. This shared language is both a cause and product of French partnership and operations in Africa. Colonialism led to the spread of the French language, which is currently an official language of 19 countries on the continent. French commanders as well as individual French Soldiers, can communicate with their counterparts in the Foreign Security Force (FSF) with relative ease. French commanders are able to leverage this long history with their counterparts as well as shared language to achieve a deep understanding of the operational environment as well as their partners.

This understanding has allowed them to train and advise at the lowest possible levels. In some cases, individual soldiers were attached to French squads to learn, train, and fight alongside enlisted French soldiers.⁸⁰ In fact, this shared language is the fundamental difference between French foreign security force development and that of the United States or United Kingdom. France distinguishes itself from the United States and United Kingdom specifically by expecting every and any military unit to be capable of advising instead of creating specialized units like the Security Force Assistance Brigades.⁸¹ Whether it is the expectation of all units to advise partner forces, the expeditionary culture or the colonial history between France and Africa, none of the concepts developed by the CPMO would be possible if not for the shared language between the French and their partner security forces.

Ensure Unity of Effort

The major challenge France faced in achieving and maintaining unity of effort is the size and scope of the FSFD mission. Operation Barkhane covered an area roughly the width of Europe with fewer than 5,000 French Soldiers.⁸² Unlike most examples of FSFD throughout history, the patron nation attempted to build the capacity of an entire region under a single command. However, this did not fundamentally alter the principles or frameworks with which they executed FSFD. Though they operated in several sovereign nations, they did so with and through regional, multinational organizations such as the G5 Sahel and Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). They further attempted to maintain a unity of effort through leveraging common interests and maintaining simplified liaison elements.

The initial creation of Operation Barkhane was an attempt to simplify the massive undertaking in Africa. France consolidated multiple ongoing operations under the single umbrella of Barkhane in 2014. This consolidation improved unity of command, within the French *Armée de Terre*, and provides an example of attempt to gain and maintain unity of effort.⁸³ France's principal challenge is advising across a multinational force, each with its own culture, language, and needs. To meet this challenge, France kept its approach partner-centric as opposed to enemy-centric. The French Armed Forces outlined its fundamental principle as partnership with the G5 Sahel and partner forces, with MINUSMA and with European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali.⁸⁴

Strategically, Operation Barkhane keeps its goals broad by stating, "Barkhane effort consists in [*sic*] a direct fight against the terrorist threat, in providing support to partner forces, in assisting international forces and in the actions in favor of the population so as

to allow a gradual return to normality in the zones where state authority was being questioned.”⁸⁵

A common thread throughout this research was the difficulty in maintaining synchronization between military and political objectives during these operations. This challenge, like many observations of this case, is a symptom of the mission’s complexity more so than a cause of it. At the tactical level, objectives were focused on the military capabilities of the partner and their ability to combat enemy forces within their areas of operations. The French appeared to maintain simplicity by focusing on military capability instead of adopting a more wholistic “nation-building” approach. At the strategic level, France had to navigate through a complex web of individual countries, regional organizations such as the G5 Sahel and ECOWAS, and global organizations such as the United Nations’ MINUSMA and the EUTM Mali. The disparity between the relative simplicity of the tactical objective and the complexity of the strategic environment presented a challenge that warrants further study. While strategic success and failure will remain debatable for the foreseeable future, this complexity initially seems to provide a universal challenge that few if any states have been able to surmount in the current international security environment.

Leadership

The research study revealed several key observations at the tactical level. The French developed a model that gradually built the skills of partner leaders and soldiers while increasing their autonomy in accordance with their abilities. This model, developed by the *Centre Terre pour le partenariat militaire opérationnel* (CPMO), was enabled by

the largely shared language between the two forces and by a significant delegation of authority to tactical commanders conducting PMO.

The CPMO developed a model for *l'articulation de combat conjoint* (joint combat articulation) which outlined a theoretical progression of command relationships with a partnered military. The model is meant to provide a framework to build a partner's capability over time. Depending on a series of factors to include the partner's capability and reliability, the commander integrates the two forces in a dynamic task organization ranging from individual partnered Soldiers attached to French squads all the way to attaching French liaison detachments to partner battalions during combat. When a partner force shows proficiency at one level of integration, the advising commander can change the task organization, slowly building the partnered units from the ground up.⁸⁶ This represents the preferred method of developing an existing foreign security force, though PMO does recognize two other forms. In situations in which a security force does not exist, the advisor executes *combat intégré*, which creates mixed units, usually recruited by the French, to serve as the foundation for a foreign security force. The least preferred method is *combat couple*, working with local militias, which carries the inherent risks of legitimacy, atrocities, and crime.⁸⁷

French commanders are given a significant amount of flexibility, responsibility and authority in these operations. Because of the sheer scope of the Sahel region, and the reality that they are trying to maintain unity of effort across multiple countries, not provinces, it is imperative that French commanders have the ability to adapt their techniques to their individual situations. In a very strong example of leadership, French

commanders are given the authority and responsibility to task organize their partnered force into their own formations in a unique configuration to suit their needs.⁸⁸ After an assessment of the FSF, the French commander decides how thoroughly integrated they will be based on the trust and tactical proficiency of the partner. Throughout the partnership, the commander may decide to equip the security forces, transfer autonomy over to larger and larger elements and oversee the development of a disproportionately large army.

The biggest leadership challenge inherent in this task is maintaining an advisory effort with a small element over such a large area. Operation Barkhane covers an area roughly the size of Europe, and the French faced numerous challenges in combatting the transnational nature of the threat. Despite support from nations such as the United States, that supplied transportation capabilities, this remained the most significant challenge in this operation.

Support Legitimacy

The research identified that legitimacy is inherently two-pronged in partnered operations such as this. The advisor has to support the legitimacy of the foreign security force as well as his own legitimacy in the country. To build and maintain the advising force's legitimacy, the French have a codified recognition that they must accept tactical risk to their forces by fighting alongside partners. They support the partner nation's legitimacy by building the confidence and autonomy of the foreign security force.

Sharing tactical risk is the cornerstone of France's PMO. As shown in Chapter 1, the key difference between French PMO and American security force assistance doctrine

is *le partenariat de combat* (combat partnership) consisting of accompaniment and joint combat operations.⁸⁹ To underline the importance of sharing this risk the CPMO states that joint combat operations “gets two units on the same footing even if they are of different nationalities to design, plan and conduct operations together. This type of commitment requires sharing the same risks in combat as in cantonment.”⁹⁰ Joint combat operations is the only part of PMO that is in direct contradiction to U.S. doctrine which states that advisors work in permissive and non-permissive environments, but generally do not participate in combat activities with partners.⁹¹ Building and maintaining a culture within the *Armée de Terre* (Land Army) that accepts that in order to build the confidence and capability of the FSF, the advisor has to be willing to put themselves into harm’s way for a shared goal. In the French model, this does not just mean that the advisor walks along with the FSF commander on and FSF-led mission. This means that they fully integrate the two units at some echelon and even, in some cases, have smaller French units support larger FSF units in combat. Sharing the risks while putting partnered leaders in charge provides a sense of ownership and legitimacy to the FSF seemingly more effective than simply putting the partner out front.

The CPMO however, recognized that this must be balanced. While thoroughly integrating with partnered forces and sharing risks may be helpful in establishing trust between advisers and their partners, it has a cost in the form of FSF autonomy. The CPMO stated “there is thus a real choice to make in terms of the objectives to pursue: a stronger French investment produces a less autonomous partner.”⁹² This concept is visualized in Figure 3. With this fact in mind, the advisor should carefully plan and adjust

the organization of the advising effort to ensure that the partner can learn and develop with the ultimate goal of operating independently. This concept is similarly applied in multiple examples throughout history without necessarily a tacit acknowledgement of the relationship between investment and autonomy. The Soviets acknowledged it by announcing the Afghanization campaign and slow withdrawal. Similarly, the CPMO compared their efforts in the Sahel to the contemporary War in Afghanistan's approach of "ANA [Afghan National Army] First, ANA led, ANA only."⁹³ Though this is clearly not a newly invented concept, it draws a theoretical model that can be used when planning foreign security force development efforts in the future.

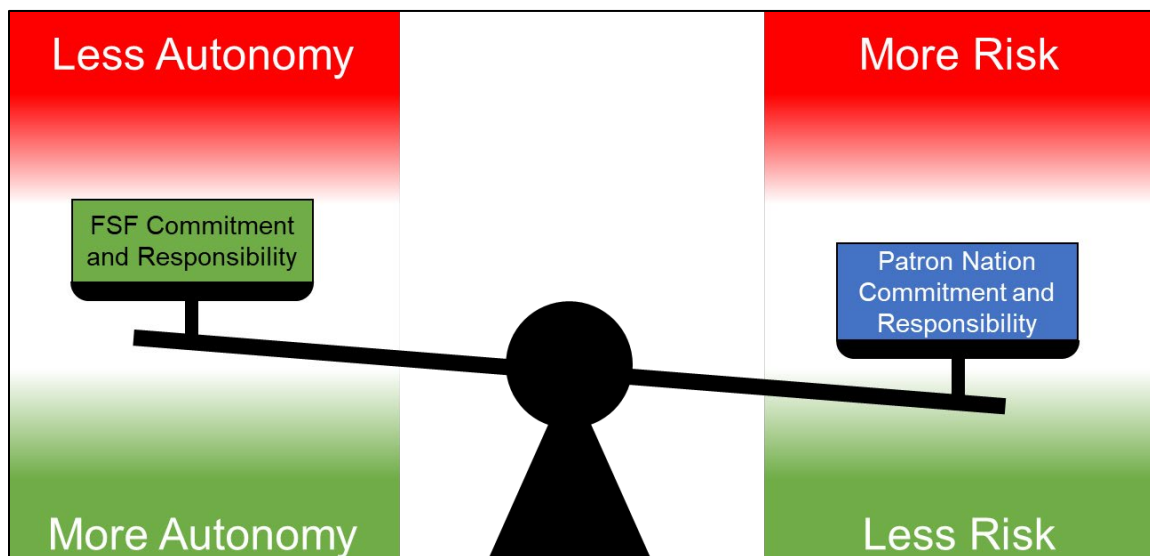


Figure 3. Balancing Risk to Force with Autonomy of Partners

Source: Created by author.

Manage Information

The modern challenge of managing information is one that constantly grows and changes. With so many individuals and interest groups having the same access to information and ability to affect the information environment, major military powers face a challenge that may yet be insurmountable. Critics pointed primarily to France's colonial past and constructed or supported a neo-colonialism narrative that significantly impacted the military's operations in the long term. Although France made consistent, adequate attempts to manage the information surrounding their operations, they were never able to overcome this narrative and the general distrust for European or "western" powers that was omnipresent in the background of Operations Serval and Barkhane.

Challenges of dealing with colonial history. Regardless of stated intentions or actual actions. France's colonial history and the concept of *françafrique* negatively shaped the perceptions of their efforts on the continent.⁹⁴ It is beyond the scope of this research project to determine exactly how history affected tactical and strategic success; however, *françafrique* and suspicions surrounding French intentions were prominent in media and professional writing, shaping both the domestic and international view of French action.⁹⁵

Domestically, French involvement in overseas military action, including in the Sahel, shaped the presidential election of 2017 after which President Emmanuel Macron sought to repair *françafrique* and reset franco-African relations.⁹⁶ As the first French head of state born after France's African colonies achieved independence, Macron was seen by many as representative of a new generation dedicated to rebuilding relations with African nations on an equal basis.⁹⁷ This understanding and rhetorical framework came

to a head when President Macron announced the end of Operation Barkhane on February 17, 2022.⁹⁸ Critical voices have framed this as a response to both the looming French presidential elections as well as growing criticism of the French presence from African youth, who often claim that promises of an end to *françafrique* has turned into a mere ritual.⁹⁹

While it is beyond the scope of this project to debate the validity, necessity or history of Franco-African relations, this research provided an insight into the complex backdrop of French foreign security force development in the Sahel. Tactical commanders and advisors may not have been burdened by the greater history of French colonialism while working with their counterparts, but this history shaped the perception of both the French and partner nation security forces as they operated. Celeste Hicks, an American journalist living in Mali, gave a first-hand account of popular perception of Operation Serval in an article the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* that provides a glimpse into the psyche of the Malian citizens.

With the launch of Operation Serval in 2013, this gradual process of drifting apart was seemingly turned on its head. Here was a formerly proud independent nation that had had an often difficult postcolonial relationship with France admitting that it was completely unable to secure its own territory. However, as the initial success of Serval became apparent and the relief died down, many Malians began to re-examine the relationship with France and began to conclude that in fact the two countries were as interdependent as they had ever been. Important questions began to be raised about just how far Mali has been able to travel since independence, and whether it was really a sovereign state. In fact there were many voices in the country – at first drowned out by the popular clamour for some kind of rescue mission from the Islamists – who believed that the decision to call in France in fact represented a deep humiliation.¹⁰⁰

This observation comes from a moment in time prior to Operation Barkhane, but it is lucid and universal enough that it represents the underlying tone of popular perception

across many Francophone nations throughout the last 20 years. Many other sources, journal articles and news interviews studied throughout this project espoused similar concerns, anxieties, and cynicism of the French presence. This backdrop of popular perception on the ground may have been less apparent at the tactical level but contributed heavily to shaping the political will of France and ultimately contributed to the end of Operation Barkhane. As Barkhane ends and more time has passed, this topic warrants further research into the effects of the neo-colonialist narrative on popular perceptions of France and local governments.

Ironically, this same colonial history benefitted French operations most notably in the use of a common language. French politicians, soldiers and news outlets were often able to communicate directly with their African counterparts. In addition, many African journals, published in French, could appeal directly to French politicians or citizens, shaping the international discourse on the subject. As evidenced by the end of Operation Barkhane, shared language does not guarantee successful information management or popular support. However, common language allows French military and diplomatic forces to communicate directly with the citizens of partnered nations, increasing overall discourse.

Sustainability

The universal hope in FSFD is that the partner nation will eventually be able to maintain stability in a country or region without direct assistance and in accordance with both nations' shared interests. The disparity between capabilities presents critical challenges when an "advanced" nation trains and equips a much more rudimentary force.

If the patron nation provides too much technical and tactical support to the partner, they can make the partner dependent on capabilities such as airpower, which prevents them from achieving sustainability. On the other side, if a patron nation does not provide such aid, they increase the risk to partnered forces and can damage the relationship with the partner itself. A political leader may understand why they need to go without airstrikes, but a Soldier on the ground whose friends are dying in combat, cannot be expected to accept such denial. In the Sahel case, France had several successes in equipping partnered forces with usable capabilities, which led directly to tactical success. Unfortunately, long-term strategic success was impeded by waning domestic support and political upheaval in partnered nations.

Giving French commanders a decentralized method of equipping the FSF, and having advisors fight alongside the partner enables a better understanding of partner capabilities and allows the French to equip accordingly. As opposed to over-equipping them with items that require external maintenance contracts, this technique has shown promising results regarding longevity. In one west-African country, the French adapted their equipping strategy for the reality of desert combat. Desert combat is typified by the *rezzou*, a long-distance raid by columns of infantry fighters usually armed with light machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. To combat Islamist tactics over the incredible distances of the Sahel, the foreign security force required capabilities that were highly mobile, and easy to maintain. By allowing flexibility in their equipping strategies, the French were able to develop Light Reconnaissance and Intervention Units. They adapted to the needs and capabilities of their partners, creating a solution that was simple

in design and execution.¹⁰¹ Critical to this strategy, the French used locally procured light trucks. Instead of attempting to sell the partner French-made or similar North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) equipment, they purchased, modified, and utilized trucks that were already available and easily repairable on the local economy. Though this prevented that patron nation from increasing security cooperation through foreign military sales, it dramatically increased the speed and confidence of the partnered force.¹⁰² The program was highly successful in rebuilding the partner's confidence in their ability to execute desert combat across long distances. In one example, the Light Reconnaissance and Intervention Unit, after a few months of training, was demonstrably superior to its adjacent units and was fully capable of controlling a zone of equal size to French units.¹⁰³

Another key observation regarding sustainability was the focus of French efforts on the military realm. France was not attempting to build or change sitting, legitimate governments in Africa. While this statement is rife for historical and political debate, pointing back to the concept of *françafrique*, the formal foreign security force development effort was not part of a larger nation-building strategy. This alleviated some challenges while creating others. For example, the French military could focus more narrowly on foreign security forces, increasing their efficacy over large areas when combat power is not dedicated elsewhere. In addition, most nations had functioning political and governmental structures and bureaucracies that reinforced the legitimacy of the French effort as well as the legitimacy of the foreign security force. As an example,

the Malian government's formal request for French assistance provides more legitimacy to their presence than an agreement with a failed or non-existent state would.

The challenge that this presents is the inherent effects of political stability of the partner nation. Since summer 2020, Mali, Chad, Guinea, Sudan, and Burkina Faso have undergone military coups.¹⁰⁴ The inherent complexity of Barkhane, a single advisory effort across multiple countries, subjects the French military to a much more chaotic political environment. Mali serves as a prime example, after initially requesting French support leading to Operation Serval, and later becoming the primary area of operations in operation Barkhane, political and social unrest led to the military coup in May, 2020 and again in August 2021.¹⁰⁵ While France initially maintained ties to the junta leaders that deposed the democratically elected president in 2020, relations became untenable for multiple reasons until February 2022, when Macron, several EU partners, and Canada announced the withdrawal from Mali, citing that Mali had become an untenable counterterrorism partner.¹⁰⁶ This example typifies the strain between the tactical efforts of developing a foreign security force and the strategic direction of the patron nation.

“Do No Harm”

The crux of this SFA Imperative lies in ensuring an advisor does not do something (or fail to do something) that undermines or inhibits the actions of other advisors or the overall security cooperation effort. Due to the nature of the case and of the SFA Imperative, there is little assessment at the time of this research project to analyze. As French Soldiers withdraw from the region and Operation Barkhane comes to an end, new research into the interoperability between elements of the security environment may

shed light on the advising efforts to maintain understanding within the advising environment. However, a major challenge faced by the French Army lies in the actions of their chosen partners and the effects of those actions on the legitimacy of the French presence as a whole.

This concept is present in several other SFA Imperatives to include supporting legitimacy and managing information. The overall observation of the research is that when partnered with a foreign security force, the actions of one's partner have the same effect as the actions of one's own Soldiers. Especially in the case of France, which already fought to counter the neo-colonialist narrative, authoritarian leanings of partners or alleged atrocities of the partnered security force can do significant harm to the strategic aims of the operation. For example, after what was considered a humiliating defeat of the Malian Army leading up to Operation Serval, Islamists and the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), reportedly executed roughly 90 Malian soldiers in the village of Aguel'hoc.¹⁰⁷ This defeat led to later concerns over retaliation and atrocities when retaking the north among the international community and residents of the country.¹⁰⁸ Though this study is far insufficient to determine or define the relationship between France's advisory efforts and the eventual coups in Mali, there is a clear relationship between Malian citizens' views of their own government and their views of France's intentions.¹⁰⁹ Regardless of the patron nation's level of awareness or support, they are seen as complicit when the partnered force acts unlawfully or even commits atrocities.

Case 2: The Soviet Union in Afghanistan

The Soviet-Afghan relationship began at the initial creation of the Soviet Union when Afghanistan was the first country in the world to formally recognize the new communist government.¹¹⁰ Turkey remained Afghanistan's biggest partner until the 1950s, but the USSR began supplying modest amounts of aid, accompanied by advisors starting in the 1920s and continuing for the next 50 years.¹¹¹ The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became the biggest provider of military aid in the late 1950s and had trained roughly 3,700 commissioned and noncommissioned officers in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union by 1977.¹¹² In 1978, the Saur Revolution brought to power the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), whom the Soviets recognized and supported, though they did not actively seek to incorporate into the USSR.¹¹³

The PDPA era between 1978 and 1979 saw a dramatic increase in security cooperation. The USSR quadrupled the numbers of advisors in the country to around 400 and increased dramatically to a total of 4,500 by April 1979.¹¹⁴ In addition to military advisors, who worked on training, planning, regulation development, and organization, representatives from the Committee for State Security (KGB) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) worked with intelligence, state, and police organizations.¹¹⁵ Advisors generally reported some progress but recognized that the starting point for Afghan security forces was very low.¹¹⁶

The USSR saw itself increasingly involved with the failing Socialist government. The factionalized PDPA announced poorly conceived, broad communist reforms that alienated large sections of the populace, then failed to enforce them, alienating their potential supporters.¹¹⁷ As the PDPA began to strain under an increasingly armed

resistance from the Mujahideen, they requested a Soviet military presence even after Prime Minister Amin assassinated the Soviet-preferred President Taraki.¹¹⁸ While Soviet leadership was initially hesitant, by December, they had decided that Hazifullah Amin had to be replaced. On December 27, KGB Special Forces assassinated Amin, and the Soviet military officially crossed into Afghanistan, initiating the Soviet-Afghan War.¹¹⁹ The Soviet incursion had specific military objectives, which is notable because it is one of the most common criticisms of the French case as well as of the Global War on Terror and Vietnam War. The Soviet goal was to overthrow the head of state of Afghanistan and reestablish a friendly government, to protect Afghanistan's borders from conventional force invasions from Pakistan and Iran, and to relieve the burden of the army of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), by securing cities, airfields, and lines of communication.¹²⁰ The intent was to free the armed forces of the DRA to do the bulk of the fighting. While throughout the course of the conflict, the Soviet Union found itself shouldering more and more of the combat, their first two objectives were met and considered successful.¹²¹

Like most other examples, the Soviet advisory organization was modeled after that of its own government and military. Akin to the Soviet model of state-run intelligence and policing, the USSR provided advisors to government and intelligence organizations in addition to its Army and policing organizations. The KGB assisted the Afghan secret police, the State Information Agency *Khadamat-e Etela'at-e Dawlati* (KhAD), later reorganized into the Ministry of National Security, *Wezarat-e-Amnyate-Dawlati* (WAD). The MVD supported the Afghan Ministry of Interior and its

gendarmerie forces (Sarandoy).¹²² The 40th Army, in addition to being the primary fighting force, served in a quasi-advisory role to the Afghan National Army that consisted of partnered operations and occasional visits to military facilities to assist with construction and civil works.¹²³

The bulk of the Soviet FSFD mission took place throughout the 1980s. The Afghan forces mirrored those of the Soviet Union and, as such, inherited many of their strengths and weaknesses. Communication and leadership lacked, and stove-piped reporting led to internal competition between different government organizations.¹²⁴ The FSF expanded dramatically; the Sarandoy grew from 8,500 people to nearly 100,000, while the KhAD expanded around 40 times over, peaking at around 70,000 personnel. The Soviet Army shouldered the bulk of combat at the time, although they were officially in a support role. They participated in combat with the Afghan army but were not embedded with them or officially organized with them.¹²⁵

The military advisory mission was carried out officially by the embedded advisory teams. The advisory teams lived with their Afghan counterparts trained with them and often took part in combat, even though they were not authorized to do so.¹²⁶ Advisory teams faced many challenges stemming from poor communication, lack of unity of effort, and language barriers. While their approach changed over time to varying degrees of success, they were never able to solve some of the major issues of force generation and desertion in the Army and averaged 30 percent desertion per year between 1980 and 1988.¹²⁷

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan is a broadly studied subject and not the focus of this research project. In summary, a combination of Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (openness) and continued Soviet casualties returning from war enabled an increasingly vocal, domestic opposition to the war. The withdrawal became official Soviet policy in 1986, and in the same year, the Soviet Union decreased development assistance and centered its focus on security.¹²⁸ Gorbachev announced in February 1988 that the Soviets would begin their withdrawal in May. He was required to do so within nine months, by the Geneva Accords of April 1988.¹²⁹

Despite the PDPA's regular requests for additional aid and a continued Soviet presence, the USSR withdrew ground forces by February 1989.¹³⁰ The Soviets ceased delivering weapons and equipment to the PDPA but resumed limited ground shipments after Najibullah reported that Afghanistan would be lost without them.¹³¹ However, several advisory efforts remained. Approximately 30 advisors with their associated interpreters and specialists continued to train the WAD, Interior Ministry, and Defense Ministry in both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.¹³²

While the Soviet withdrawal did weaken opposition to the Najibullah government, by removing the desire for many Mujahideen fighters who fought only to remove the "foreign invader," the PDPA eventually fell shortly after the USSR when the new Russian leader, Boris Yeltsin, stopped sending aid entirely.¹³³ The PDPA outlasted the Soviet Union and may have even remained in power to the present day had Russia honored the treaty obligations of the USSR.¹³⁴

In terms of enduring success, the Soviet reason for invasion was to reestablish a secure and friendly government on its southern border, which they accomplished.¹³⁵ The strategic goals of their withdrawal were to maintain influence in Afghanistan in a way that did not leave them vulnerable to additional Mujahideen attack, and to create an environment that facilitated a defensible border between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan.¹³⁶ From this perspective, the Soviets were largely successful, but that is only a reasonable interpretation because they established clear strategic goals to begin with. The strategic objectives did not include addressing the enduring security issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Therefore, a scholar could look at the exacerbated contention over the Durand Line, the millions of refugees, the continued existence of hostile groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the escalating power of regional commanders as evidence of Soviet strategic failure. But the key insight is that the Soviets maintained a clear set limited strategic objectives and were on-the-whole successful in accomplishing them through combat operations and foreign security force development. The Soviet efforts to develop the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan offers many insights to foreign security force development. In many ways, highlighting, underpinning, and reinforcing the United States' current SFA doctrine. The rest of this section analyzes the case through the lens of the Joint SFA Imperatives.

Understand the Operational Environment

While the Soviets had an established diplomatic relationship with Afghanistan since 1920, there was no further military or socio-cultural relationship upon which to found a long-term cultural understanding. Most advisors were either ill-equipped, ill-

prepared for or unwilling to develop a deep understanding of the cultural aspects of their operational environment.

While there were some significant exceptions, most advisors arriving in Afghanistan had little formal or specialized training for the mission they were undertaking. Outside of the military, training for a party advisor was typically a one-week course covering the political, military, and economic situation in the country.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the political ideology, paired with significant independence of advisors once in country, set conditions for many to behave in counterproductive ways or even contradict directives from Moscow.¹³⁸ Party advisors often were the most ignorant and insensitive to local customs, and enacted programs and policies that were ideologically correct, but counterproductive in practice. In one such incident, a party advisor in Khost had a mosque shut down and played Marxist dialectics through its loudspeakers.¹³⁹ While this fit communist ideology and may have been a productive practice in another theater, it may have further alienated the faith-centric population and did not support Moscow's overall aims.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Soviet embedded military advisory teams consisted of primarily majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels. Overall, it was a cohort of experienced military officers, but few had advisory experience.¹⁴⁰ KGB advisors underwent two years of training in language, history, customs, and culture before deployment. Although it was far less than their KGB counterparts, military received various training and orientation courses prior to deployment that was under a year long, but more in depth and comprehensive than similar American efforts during Vietnam and

the Global War on Terror.¹⁴¹ Political advisors typically had the least training.¹⁴² This mirrored the overall advisory effort, a total force of around 4,500 people in 1978, most of whom had little knowledge of the country or of its social, political and economic situation. Many advisory efforts were counterproductive, such as agricultural advisors' recommendations that Afghanistan develop a collective farming system similar to the Soviet Union.¹⁴³ The effort ultimately failed and impeded the efforts of the PDPA and the Soviet Union to succeed in reorganizing the country.

As a military advisor, the biggest challenge lay in their role as a go-between or liaison for the Afghan and Soviet forces as well as the language barrier. Soviet advisors were trained in Dari and spoke primarily to their partners in Dari. When stationed in a primarily Pashtun area, advisors were usually given a Pashto translator. Their ability to communicate enabled their primary roles, which were to coordinate movement between the 40th Army and Afghan units, and to serve as an access point for Soviet capabilities such as air support and artillery.¹⁴⁴ There was little or no appetite to integrate forces and joint operations consisted of separate military movements to supporting objectives. Inability to communicate effectively between the soldiers of the 40th Army and the Afghan Army likely contributed to this decision as there is little to gain from integrating units if they cannot communicate and train. This barrier to understanding, coupled with the imminent need for military success often led advisors to take on command roles, determining their own courses of action and issuing directives to their Afghan counterparts.¹⁴⁵

The Russian Institute of Military History of the Ministry of Defense provided a slightly different perspective. While it did not outright disagree with the assessment of Oliker and Kalinovsky, it gave a less critical perspective:

Soviet military advisers, specialists and interpreters had a long history of working with their Afghan counterparts through Soviet-Afghan agreements during the 1960s and 1970s. The majority of these had a high commitment to carrying out their internationalist duty. They were sappers, artillerymen, medics and other specialties. They did not receive any specialized training for this mission but they came to love Afghanistan. It was not easy living and the years they lived there provided a thorough education. The Soviet press did not cover any of their activities or fights until after the Communist Revolution. The advisers introduced the Afghan Army to modern equipment, techniques and skills. Once the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan, the training and preparation of advisors improved. The advisers were recognized for their service. In 1986 alone, 272 Soviet military advisers and interpreters were awarded orders and medals of the Soviet Union and 288 received Afghanistan decorations.¹⁴⁶

This perspective counters the often critical narrative that depicts the Soviet Army as fumbling through Afghanistan and mercilessly attacking civilians, but does confirm the level of training received by military advisors. Furthermore, regardless of which perspective prevails, both highlight the differences in culture between the Afghans and the Soviets.

Afghan culture contributed heavily to the challenges of the Soviet Union. One of what Lester Grau called the “eternal truths” about Afghanistan is the fragmented nature of its politics and fierce independence of its people.¹⁴⁷ While any sitting central government has typically proven unable to repel foreign invasion, the true combat power of the country has risen up from the remote mountains and agricultural areas.¹⁴⁸ Boys in Afghanistan typically receive a firearm before their teens and learn to use it. As Grau points out: “the independent nature of the people means that they are reluctant to accept military discipline. They can be fierce warriors but indifferent Soldiers.”¹⁴⁹ This cultural

foundation led to a paradoxical longevity problem. The Soviets needed to remain in support of the Afghan Army for as long as necessary to assure their success, however their very presence decreased the likelihood of their partner's success as it increased jihadist forces who sought to fight off the foreign invaders. In fact, the Soviet withdrawal resulted in a nearly immediate reduction of troops on both the government and Mujahideen sides.¹⁵⁰ The Soviet mindset, and indeed the western mindset throughout history, viewed this as a largely ideological struggle between communism and anti-communism. In reality, many of the Mujahideen fighters viewed the conflict as a foreign invasion of their lands and ceased fighting after they accomplished their goal. Some fighters immediately returned home, joined the government tribal militia forces, and were paid to guard the lines of communication between the Soviet Union and the cities.¹⁵¹

Both the Mujahideen and the Soviets learned in practice, the realities of guerrilla war. First and foremost, guerilla war is a long-term proposition. During the spring-thaw following the Russian invasions, tribal elders lost large armies (*lashkars*) to Soviet artillery and air power. They turned to the mujahideen, who were already fighting guerilla war.¹⁵² Success required persistence and patience; and victory can be attained politically through the homeland of the occupier.¹⁵³ Ultimately, it was the deteriorating domestic situation in the Soviet Union that led to Gorbachev's decision to limit resources to Afghanistan, and many of his military advisors recommended withdrawing.¹⁵⁴

The Soviets came to the same conclusion. "Guerrilla war is a contest of endurance and national will. The side with the highest moral commitment will hold the ground at the end of the conflict."¹⁵⁵ These realizations point to a foundational truth of foreign security

force development: that it cannot succeed quickly. While these observations refer to guerilla warfare specifically and not development of the partnered government's forces, they are inextricably related. As is seen in the Soviet case, the protracted guerrilla war was a consequence of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's Army's inability to defeat the Mujahideen in the rural areas of the country.¹⁵⁶ The conflict and the capability of the foreign security force are interlinked and to improve the capability of the partnered force would have decreased the burden on the Soviet Army. Perhaps this would have increased the Soviet tolerance for long term-conflict.

Ensure Unity of Effort

Soviet FSFD efforts and the resulting Afghan government modeled the structure and subsequent challenges of the Soviet Union itself. Advisors reported separately to their various miseries according to their reporting requirements and failed to communicate effectively between the MVD, military and KGB. In fact, this environment of stove-piping and competition often led to conflicting reports of Afghan success within the Soviet government and detracted from the overall efficacy of the advising effort.¹⁵⁷

The overall structure of the advising mission was similar to many of the models used today by the west. A Soviet government specialist from a given ministry embedded himself with a counterpart ministry or office on the Afghan side. Their mission was to build up their counterpart's capabilities and institutions while reporting and providing channel to patron nation government resources and programs. Military, KGB and MVD advisory teams had separate chains of command leading back to Moscow, and the ambassador and his staff reported separately through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Requests for resources went through multiple channels to include the Defense Ministry. This model challenged any potential for unity of effort and many advisory teams operated in competition with one another.¹⁵⁸

Soviet military, MVD and KGB advisors were directly tasked with coordinating the efforts of Afghan armed forces with the 40th Army. The FSF in this case funneled all reports, requests for assistance and often decisions through these advisors. The USSR sought to synchronize the 40th Army, the Turkestan Military District and the Central Asian Military District through the Operational Group of the Ministry of Defense. From 1979 to 1985, the general staff presence was headed by Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergey Sokolov and later from 1985 to 1989 by General Valentin Vorennikov. The group would meet with senior Afghan military officials, who had their own Soviet military advisers. This effort did not fully synchronize the advisory effort across the military and government presence.

Unsurprisingly, this conflict translated directly to the FSF and government agencies of the partnered nation. Although there were some command structures at the local level to coordinate activities, no formal, centralized organization until 1987. In fact, the Afghan armed forces did not have a single-unified commander until the Operational Group helped to create the position of Commander in Chief of Afghanistan, which was assigned to the Country's leader at the time, Mohammed Najibullah.¹⁵⁹

Leadership

In the context of SFA, leadership is generally frames in two ways, the leadership of the advisor and the leadership of the advised. In the case of the Soviet Union, advisors

often made decisions and dictated them to their Afghan counterparts in a role that often blurred or crossed the line between advisor and commander.¹⁶⁰ Although many sources weigh more heavily to one side or the other, most generally agree that this relationship stemmed from a combination of Soviet self-assuredness, real or perceived Afghan incompetence, and the stove-piped communication and command structure of the advising effort. Reportedly, Babrak Karmal directed the advisory group to “command our forces as if they were your own,” a statement sometimes credited with encouraging Soviet advisors to take control.¹⁶¹

At the strategic level, the Soviets suffered from a changeover in leadership within the party that is often uncharacteristic of authoritarian regimes, but more prevalent in democracies. Although the tumultuous succession of leadership from Brezhnev to Chernenko, to Andropov, to Gorbachev was due to health and death, as opposed to elections, the political outcomes were similar to the challenges of democracy. Changeover resulted in inconsistent or inflexible policy and a general unwillingness to significantly overhaul or update the Afghanistan policy.¹⁶²

There are fewer examples of Afghan leadership in most published works. One notable example however, is General Farukh, commander of the 25th Infantry Division of the Army of the DRA during the defense of Khost in March 1991. General Farukh graduated from a Russian military school and spoke excellent Russian.¹⁶³ He often transmitted his radio messages in Russian in an attempt to slow down Mujahideen interception.¹⁶⁴ Though few details are available following their eventual defeat and the fall of Khost, Farukh serves as an example of a competent, Soviet-trained military leader

who used language to his advantage. It is beyond the scope of this research, but merits consideration that a greater history of Russian-speaking Afghan leaders is available because they are more present in declassified Soviet documents and briefings.

Unfortunately, while foreign security force development seeks to engender a strong sense of leadership and competence in the foreign security force leadership, it is more difficult to change an entire leadership culture than to improve an individual. The night before the fall of Khost, the General held a night-time alert and discovered that there were no officers present in many of his units, they had all either abandoned their positions or had left their fighting positions to spend the night in the city.¹⁶⁵

Afghan strategic leadership presented a similar challenge in the decision to defend Khost in the first place. While military resources may have been better spent elsewhere, Khost's value was inherently political. The sitting President Najibullah, Minister of Defense Tanai, and Minister of the Interior Watanjar all had tribal ties to the area. Loss of Khost would have been considered an affront to governmental leadership.¹⁶⁶ The justification from holding Khost was to deny the Mujahideen a city which they could declare the capital of a new "Free Afghanistan" in opposition to the PDPA.¹⁶⁷ These concerns were ultimately unrealized, as the Mujahideen and Pashtun tribesmen proved unable to coalesce into a self-sustaining government. They pillaged the town of Khost in what some authors have marked the end of the idealism of the *jihad* (holy war). The PDPA leadership's political need to hold Khost tied up resources that would have been used elsewhere.¹⁶⁸

Support Legitimacy

Perhaps the most difficult challenge the Soviets faced was in building the legitimacy of the Afghan Army. The conscript Army of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, by its very existence, established several paradoxical challenges. Forced conscription led to higher desertion and increased the danger of attacks on Soviets from government forces.¹⁶⁹ This creates a cycle of distrust, in which the patron nation cannot trust their partner and that lack of trust leads to actions that undermine the partner's trust of the patron. In this case, a lack of trust led to a lack of independence and their communist ideology undermined their efforts.

Conscription created challenges for both the patron nation and the partner nation. The Afghan Army faced a critical shortage of personnel. To fill these shortages, party advisors as well as military advisors took part in a series of efforts that included propaganda, negotiations with local authorities and military operations. Recruitment operations, called *otlov* (catching) by the Soviets consisted of surrounding a village or school and sending in activists or officers to force young men to join the military. These practices usually involved a fair amount of violence and cruelty as new conscripts were beaten severely.¹⁷⁰ While this tactic may have increased manning in the short-term, most Soviet advisors believed that such practices would only increase the motivation for conscripted Soldiers to desert later.¹⁷¹

The Soviet Army itself faced similar challenges through its own conscription policies. As wealthy Soviet citizens increasingly sought to bribe their way out of the draft, the military was disproportionately filled with disenfranchised youth from factories and collective farms.¹⁷² As Soldiers found themselves "unwelcome occupiers in a hostile

land,” morale plummeted, many Soldiers developed a narcotics habit funded through criminal behavior.¹⁷³ While current, joint doctrine refers specifically to the partnered nation’s legitimacy, it takes for granted, the legitimacy of the patron nation. If the nation’s security force is already hated, feared, or otherwise looked negatively upon, atrocities and criminal activity on the part of the patron nation exacerbate this sentiment.

A positive correlation exists between the partner nation’s legitimacy and the foreign security force’s tactical success on the battlefield. In the simplest terms and as predicted and demonstrated in the French case, when government forces can win in battle, it increases their confidence and capability in future battles. This contributes to the overall perceived legitimacy of the government. The challenge that appeared in the Soviet case, is that tactical competence cannot be truly evaluated until the patron nation steps away from the fighting. Immediately following the Soviet withdrawal, the Afghan Army did not do well. Desertions rose dramatically, soldiers took their weapons and joined the Mujahideen or went home. Some units even systematically sold weapons to the Mujahideen to include two helicopters that were flown and given to Ahmad Shah Masood the week before the Soviet withdrawal.¹⁷⁴ However, the Army that stayed began to fight and win battles, proving that they could sustain their effort. Konduz fell briefly to the Mujahideen but was retaken by government forces. The DRA Army’s eventual success during the Siege of Jalalabad showed that the Mujahideen were unable to form a cohesive conventional force as the smaller army defeated them.¹⁷⁵ In March 1990, the Minister of Defense, General Shahnawaz Tanai joined Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in a failed *coup d’état*. This showed the Afghan government forces that they

could effectively respond to crisis at some level.¹⁷⁶ The government's security forces continued to fight and win battles against the Mujahideen, giving credence to the argument that the PDPA may have been able to remain in power if Boris Yelstin had continued to honor the aid agreements after the fall of the Soviet Union. Though this may not have completely met the idealistic, consent of the governed, western definition of legitimacy, it certainly could have fit within Max Weber's definition of a state having monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force over a given territory.¹⁷⁷ So Soviet training and the actions of the DRA Army did support legitimacy, though not in the way that the Joint SFA Imperatives would embrace.

Manage Information

The Soviet case took place at a time when global mass media existed but was neither as ubiquitous nor as fast as it is today. This slower, more manageable information environment did appear easier to operate within, but it also made it easier for poor communication and metrics to guide Soviet policy. Information management in this case generally fell into three categories: Soviet domestic information suppression, Mujahideen messaging to the west, PDPA propaganda, and Soviet internal information management.

As established through previous observations, the national will of a patron nation to sustain effort is critical to long-term development of foreign security forces. A key difference between Soviet policy at the time and modern realities was the ability for the government to control the information reaching the Russian people. Soviet media limited coverage of the war to positive messaging, such as showing Soviet troops building orphanages without acknowledging their role in creating those orphans. Within the first

two years of the conflict, the Soviet press had only covered a few dozen of the thousands of Soviet casualties and the families of the deceased were sworn to secrecy in order to receive the remains of their loved ones.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, the Soviet military kept non-accredited journalists out of the country, forcing them to rely on press releases from neighboring countries.¹⁷⁹ This style of suppressive information management may have contributed to the longevity of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, but admittedly, the authoritarian nature of the USSR may have prevented popular dissent even if information had been more widely available.

Within Afghanistan, a similar observation of the time is found in the Mujahideen's occasional difficulty getting their own messages out. They sometimes found that publicity and media support were essential but difficult to attain due to the lack of willingness or ability of western journalists to report from the battlefield.¹⁸⁰ While such a challenge seems unlikely today, this does stress the importance of information management during conflict and the access it provides to support.

Within Afghanistan, the PDPA undertook activities most aligned with the Joint SFA Imperatives. Their propaganda campaigns sought to build the legitimacy of the central government and security forces and gain popular support, specifically in villages adjacent to National Highway 01, known as the "ring road." During these operations, Soviet forces would establish an outer perimeter for the DRA forces, who would establish an inner perimeter and send in propaganda teams.¹⁸¹ Such teams would provide food, medical treatment, school supplies and even entertainment in the form of pro-government plays as they traveled from village to village.¹⁸² The PDPA also attempted to ameliorate

some of the damage caused by their secularism by creating a Ministry of Religious Affairs to support friendly clergy.¹⁸³

The final leg of information management comes from within the advisory effort itself. Every advisor had an influence on the domestic understanding of the situation in Afghanistan through their reporting. Written and oral reports tended to focus on the positive such as the growth of the party ranks, inflated statistics measuring the party's authority over the land, the attitude of the local populace, and others.¹⁸⁴ As mentioned in previous sections, challenges with duplicate and conflicting reporting between party organizations inhibited the situational understanding of Soviet decision makers. This lack of solid situational understanding, a common theme in many examples of foreign security force development and guerilla warfare, may have contributed to the Soviet decision to withdraw, even when the Mujahideen were nearly defeated.¹⁸⁵

Additionally, the Soviet Union contended both its natural tendencies as well as the prevailing view, that its intent was to spread ideology and establish an additional client state. In fact, evidence made available after the cold war shows that Soviet leaders were generally uninterested in spreading communism or economic modernity in Afghanistan. But rather, the USSR made the decision to invade Afghanistan to stop what they perceived as a deteriorating situation and to establish a more stable government, preferably one that was not at risk of leaning toward a stronger partnership with the United States.¹⁸⁶ Soviet documents even suggest that advisors were specifically instructed to "temper the political ambitions and revolutionary fervor of Afghan communists."¹⁸⁷

Sustainability

A key element of the Soviet model was its propensity to develop sustainable FSF. Key characteristics of this tendency were the consistent arming and training of FSF personnel of Soviet equipment prior to the major conflict and programs involving Professional Military Education. While Afghanistan was still a monarchy, the Soviet Union established a litany of infrastructure, economic and military exchange programs. Under the auspices of the latter, thousands of Afghan military officers went to the USSR for advanced training. As these relationships grew and many military officers gained leftist political leanings, KGB officers began to provide organizational advice.¹⁸⁸ Olikier described the scope and impact of such programs after talking to several Soviet Analysts of the time.

Large numbers of Afghans also went to the USSR for training... But if by 1977 some 3,700 Afghan officers and NCOs had been trained in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, the senior military leadership in Afghanistan remained dominated by Turkish-trained personnel, at least according to one Soviet specialist, because of people who had come up through the ranks when Turkey was Afghanistan's dominant security partner and, likely, because of those leaders' tendency to promote those with similar education.¹⁸⁹

This model alludes to the inherent challenges of long-term institutional FSFD. To build a sustainable organization, the patron nation must engender and support the creation of a professional class of leaders, but it carries the risk of increasing nepotism and possibly even corruption in the long run. Members of the Soviet Advisory Commission speculated that the nepotism in this system may have inspired younger, Soviet-trained officers to support the Saur Revolution in 1978.¹⁹⁰ NATO faced similar challenges due to the multinational cooperation and training of Afghan forces. In addition, France faces similar

challenges in Africa as it competes with multiple other countries for access and influence garnered by FSFD.

A key challenge to sustainability in the Soviet case stemmed from the Soviet decision to model the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's Army after the Soviet Army. The Soviet Army was designed for a large-scale armored conflict with NATO or China.¹⁹¹ However, the Soviets soon realized that their structure was inadequate for the counterinsurgency they faced and began to restructure accordingly. They began sending home tank and air defense elements and replacing them with more infantry. They modified equipment and tactics to meet the tactical needs of counterinsurgency. Above all, the Soviet Army realized that the Afghan conflict was a tactical, not operational, fight that required tactical flexibility. In spite of this understanding, the Soviets still structured the DRA army under the "old" model. The DRA Army still fielded air defense, chemical, armored, and mechanized units, emphasizing that this army was organized for conventional combat, not their current fight.

In addition, the entire security architecture was organized for regime survival more so than for civil protection or combat effectiveness, another imitation of the Soviet model. Aside from the traditional Army, the KhAD (later called the WAD) served as the intelligence arm of the security forces and maintained a separate armed force, modeled after the KGB. The Sarandoy, a national police force, mimicked the function of the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs and maintained a militarized police capability. The three organizations often worked together out of necessity, but were functionally separate, rival systems designed to counterbalance each other and prevent one another

from attempting to overthrow the regime.¹⁹² While a western observer may see this as an example showing the problems this causes with sustainability, it may also be a good example. It is beyond the scope of this research project to determine the efficacy of this model, which worked for the Soviet Union for decades. Perhaps the more significant threat to the government's sustainability is the policy and conditions that merit such a relationship between security enterprises.

“Do No Harm”

In the case of the Soviet Union, this amorphous concept is most clearly violated by collective Soviet advisor behavior and Soviet condoning of or participation in atrocities against civilians.

A key characteristic apparent in the Soviet advising apparatus is the lack of a unity of effort. As mentioned before, often, advisors and their partners would have competing reporting requirements, priorities, and agendas. This led to a degradation both in the realized efficacy of the advising program as well as in the legitimacy of the Afghan and Soviet governments. In one such example, KGB advisor Valery Mitochkin, along with the KhAD, convinced a local rebel commander to make peace with the government. This would include all of the commander's family and the roughly 300 fighters loyal to him. In exchange, the militants and their families would be given housing, employment and could keep their weapons. The deal fell apart when a local governor refused to provide housing, a military commander insisted on seizing weaponry and the Soviet party advisor refused to cooperate or mediate or assist.¹⁹³ Incidents like this damaged the

credibility of the Soviets, as well as the Afghans, and significantly hindered the prospects of large-scale reconciliation at all.

In addition, the poor morale among Soviet troops led to several atrocities that significantly affect the advising environment. At Soviet checkpoints, soldiers would search Afghan vehicles for weapons and occasionally robbing and murdering civilians found with large amounts of cash.¹⁹⁴ The Soviets often destroyed villages and murdered the occupants in retaliation for ambushes or when suspected of aiding the guerillas.¹⁹⁵ The Soviets were able to pacify some villages by simply offering exclusion from bombing in exchange for breaking all ties with resistance groups.¹⁹⁶ In many ways, Soviet policy appeared to be to terrorize the population, not win them over. Soviets regularly called artillery and airstrikes on villages without warning. Press gangs followed many sweeps and Afghan youth were conscripted on the spot.¹⁹⁷

The very title of the final SFA Imperative suggests its “negative reinforcement” nature. There may be no way to actively succeed, but a million of ways to fail. The Soviet Union provided many examples of failure that are in no way unique to the Soviet-Afghan War. Atrocities have existed for as long as war itself, however the nature of FSFD is constructive, meaning it involves building a sustainable force, not just destroying one. The constructive nature of FSFD requires the advising nation to refrain and maintain the discipline of their soldiers to be successful.

Findings

Secondary Research Question #1: What programs, practices, and activities lead to tactical success of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

By comparing the two case studies and their findings, the research pointed to several observations and practices that lead to tactical success—that is, advising on the ground. The purpose of this research question was to identify practices and advantages that aid advising a partner nation at the tactical level of war. The researcher expected to find individual “dos and don’ts” as are often presented in cultural or advising training in the U.S. Army. Actual findings were more nuanced but show a demonstrated advantage in both cases. The findings are that language training, risk acceptance, and capability-based equipping significantly contribute to the tactical success of FSFD.

Shared language increases interoperability. At the most fundamental level, the ability of two Soldiers to communicate with each other is a key advantage when developing foreign security forces. In concrete terms, the French were much more capable of modifying and adapting their techniques to the situation on the ground because they could expect any of their Soldiers to advise effectively. Shared language also increases the propensity for individual advisors to learn and become more fluent in the culture of their partner nation. If advising and training are the practice of transferring knowledge and experience from one person to the other, language is the gatekeeper of that process.

The French take great pride in their willingness to “fight alongside” their partners. This concept requires an increased tolerance for risk acceptance. French doctrine codifies this expectation for *partenariat de combat* (combat partnership) carries with it an

additional burden and responsibility on the advisor to make sure that their partner is sufficiently ready for operations. At the tactical level, the advisor with “skin in the game” simultaneously must ensure that they trust their partners and builds legitimacy of both the partnered force and the patron force. On the contrary, the Soviet case, reminiscent of the U.S. experience in Afghanistan, advising and “partnership” consisted of a cycle of not trusting the host nation, taking additional tactical responsibility, causing the FSF to rely more on the patron nation, reducing their own independence and making them less competent. In the course of this study, it is critical to observe that risk acceptance goes beyond the normal risks of combat. To develop a FSF, the commander must knowingly and willingly put his Soldiers and unit at greater risk by executing operations alongside the FSF instead of executing the mission themselves.

Finally, the patron nation’s ability to provide equipment in accordance with the partner’s capability was a key and direct contributor to tactical success of the foreign security force. In modern conflicts, technologically advanced nations use equipment that is far beyond the capability of the partner nation to use and maintain. This incompatibility is not a limitation of the partner nation’s Soldier’s ability to understand or operate the equipment. It is most often a limitation of the nation’s infrastructure, industry, and economy to maintain advanced equipment on a large scale. When a nation is given equipment that it cannot maintain, it is not put to good use, equipment falls into disrepair or worse, is sold on the black market. In the French case, the Light Reconnaissance and Intervention Units were a prime example of the benefits of effectively equipping the partnered force. The French procured locally available, Chinese-made pickup trucks that

provided critical mobility without over-burdening the maintenance capability of the local economy. In addition, they retained control of the vehicles until accountability and maintenance programs were robust enough to ensure they were maintained and kept by the partnered military.

The Soviets were not faced with as significant a problem because they had been the primary supplier and trainer to the Afghan Army since the 1950s. As such, most equipment the partnered force carried was simply older versions of the most modern equipment at the time. The Soviets further benefitted from the time period. While modern technologies such as Anti-Tank Guided Missiles and Man Portable Air Defense Systems were making their way onto the battlefield, the technology gap between the Soviets and the Afghans was much smaller than that of the French and many of their African partners.

While the research suggested a multitude of additional factors that led to tactical success, additional correlations would require individual battle analyses. Suggested relationships that warrant further study include: the training, structure and composition of the enemy force and its effects on civilian and soldier morale, the domestic population's view of the government's armed forces and their willingness to assist, and religious extremism's effects on the information environment. The research did, however, demonstrate strong relationships between tactical success of the foreign security force and shared language, the patron nation's risk acceptance, and the patron nation's willingness and capability-based equipping of the foreign security force.

Secondary Research Question #2:
What programs, practices, and activities contribute to strategic success
of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD)?

The secondary research question is simple in concept but proved incredibly complex and nuanced throughout the course of this research. The most significant challenge, and in fact, the core resistance to this research from academics, was the concept of strategic success and strategic failure. There can be no single answer as to what constitutes strategic success because it creates multiple questions: Whose success? If one partner is successful but the partner is not, is that still success? How long must success last to be still considered success? This challenge does not invalidate the concept or the question, but rather, led to the first answer to the research question: the most important activity for a nation to do to contribute to strategic success is first to define what that success is. There is a strong argument that the USSR was strategically successful in Afghanistan even after the withdrawal. Their goal was to maintain a Soviet-aligned government on their border, and although the PDPA eventually fell to the Mujahideen, they did so only after Boris Yeltsin ended military aid several years later. So, in this case, the purpose of the invasion was met, but later decisions counteracted it.

The French case is more difficult to assess because of its contemporary nature. Even though France has now announced the conclusion of Operation Barkhane and withdrawal of forces, it remains to be seen what the strategic effects on their operations will be. However, France faces significant difficulty in achieving anything that could be defined as “strategic success” not because of any incompetence in their ability to develop their partners, but because of the broad and ambiguous nature of their strategic objectives in the first place. Even at face value, putting a friendly government in power is much

more achievable than stabilizing a region. Several analysts, academics, and journalists have already begun debating whether Operations Serval or Barkhane had any measurable strategic effect on the region.

The second factor that contributes to strategic success is limiting the adjustment or “scope creep” of operational objectives. This inference is made as a contrapositive to an observation across both cases. In both the French and Russian cases, military and national involvement exceeded the duration, and cost expected at the beginning. France’s Operation Serval was designed as a stop-gap measure while the United Nations put together an international force to combat the jihadist fighters in Mali, but in some ways turned into a long-term commitment that the domestic audience (both political and the populace) was eventually unwilling to accept. This story arc mirrors multiple examples throughout history to include the French and American operations in Vietnam and the Global War on Terror. In the Soviet case, there have been volumes of chicken-egg debates on whether Afghanistan caused the collapse of the Soviet Union or the latter caused the failure in Afghanistan. Such is beyond the scope of this research project and the research does not expect to contribute meaningfully to this discussion. However, Soviet case highlighted that even in an authoritarian society, where it is often assumed that the will of the people matters less, if at all, to the decisions of the government, the extended duration of the Soviet Afghan war had negative impacts at home and abroad as Soldiers and casualties returned from the front lines.

A related, but even more challenging factor lies in the patron nation’s ability to counter what has been referred to as the “neo-colonialism” narrative. France was never

able to effectively counter the persistent narrative from its critics that its involvement in the Sahel was nothing more than an attempt to maintain the dominance it enjoyed during the colonial era. The United States faced a similar challenge during the Iraq war when critics rallied around the narrative that the United States was attempting to steal Iraq's oil. Mitigating counter-narratives is a challenge for democracies operating in the modern information environment. Regardless of motives, military objectives, or conduct of operations, it can be safely assumed that any attempt at developing a partnered foreign security force will face some counter-narrative. These information campaigns, if left unchecked, may degrade public support for the mission and ultimately lead to its unsatisfactory end. This challenge continues to be an area of study and emphasis with the development of the information domain concept in U.S. Army doctrine and the growth of information operations as a discipline; however, there is no easy, short term solution to this challenge at the time of this study.

The concept of strategic success is difficult to quantify and categorize. The research indicates that this ambiguity must be embraced and mitigated when attempting to develop foreign security forces. A nation engaging in foreign security force development must first, deliberately define what strategic success means and what the operational goals are. The next critical piece is to limit changes, expansion, and instability in those goals. Throughout the operation, the nation must persistently counter information campaigns that can sway domestic and international support from achievement of those objectives.

Summary

This chapter presented the observations made during this research project to answer the primary research question: How can the U.S. Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership? To that end, the researcher studied primary and secondary documents, pulling observations, and identifying patterns in actions that contributed to or detracted from the tactical and strategic success of foreign security force development in the two identified cases. By organizing findings according to the framework of the Joint Security Force Assistance Imperatives defined in JP 3-20, the researcher was able to identify programs, practices and activities executed by the French and Russians in both cases and emphasize patterns. The reasoning supporting this research is that, if a certain behavior or action is noticeably effective in both the contemporary case in Africa and the 40-year-old case in Afghanistan, there is a significant likelihood that such action will be effective in future attempts at foreign security force development.

Sharing a common language, accepting tactical risk, and equipping partnered forces appropriately all had a measurable, positive effect on the tactical outcomes of foreign security force development. Because of their shared use of French, French commanders in the Sahel region had more flexibility in adapting their advising strategies to the needs of their counterparts. Nearly any French Soldier could be reasonably expected to advise a partnered Soldier, and this appears to have reduced confusion and improved interoperability, allowing the French units to fight alongside various African partners utilizing their inversion ratio concept. By accepting the tactical risk associated with fighting alongside a partner and sharing the risk to forces, the French were able to

create a closer bond with their partners then was demonstrated in the Soviet case. By showing, at the tactical and individual levels, that the advisor is willing to put themselves at risk to help their partner, the relationship between the advisor and advised can become less observer/evaluator to trainee and more coach to teammate. Finally, equipping the partnered force according to their ability to use and maintain the provided equipment proved beneficial in both cases. The French deliberately equipped their partners in desert regions with equipment that was not as modern or sophisticated as was available but was more agile and did not require additional economic and industrial capabilities to maintain. The Soviets benefited from the longstanding contracts and security cooperation already in place since the 1920s.

The secondary research question identified that strategic success is not universally defined. As such, the most significant contributing factors to strategic success are first to define what the goals of foreign security force development are, then to prevent scope creep or adjustment to those goals. In both cases studied here, and in many other examples not covered, the patron nation begins a mission without a significant effort to plan foreign security force development. In some cases, foreign security force development is initiated only as an afterthought or a sequel plan to patron nation led operations. This unpreparedness can lead to poorly defined strategic goals when developing a partner nation that may prevent the patron nation from achieving any form of “success.” In both the French and Russian cases, FSFD became a protracted effort that gradually lost domestic support over time. This depreciation of gains makes it more and more challenging to achieve strategic success. As a contrapositive, the research indicates

that the opposite is true. If a nation can clearly define limited objectives and decide that their achievement will constitute that nation's "success," they can achieve that success.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study sought to inform future strategic decisions regarding the definition, role, and execution of Security Force Assistance (SFA) by the United States. SFA is a critical piece of security cooperation in developing and sustaining strategic partnerships with foreign nations that will remain critical to strengthening the post-World War II international order. Unfortunately, the U.S. Army has limited and mixed experience in developing Foreign Security Forces (FSF) ending most recently in the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban in 2021. This study studied two non-U.S. examples of Foreign Security Force Development (FSFD) to identify lessons learned and synthesize them into recommendations by answering the primary research question: How can the United States Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both enduring military success and security partnership? The study sought to answer the primary research question through the secondary research questions, which explored what programs, practices, and activities contributed to or detracted from the tactical and strategic success of FSFD.

The research determined that key programs, practices, and activities to help achieve tactical success are an emphasis on shared language prior to engagement in FSFD, willingness for commanders and advisors to accept tactical risk to assess their counterparts properly, and develop a lasting relationship, and equipping the FSF according to their ability to maintain and utilize the capabilities without patron nation support. The research determined that, though never guaranteed, clearly defining mission

objectives ahead of time and eliminating scope-creep or adjustment to those objectives, planning for foreign security force development deliberately as a part of any major operation; and safeguarding long-term national will, enables strategic success.

Primary Research Question:
How can the U.S. Army develop partnered militaries to ensure both
enduring military success and security partnership?

The primary research question differs from the secondary questions in that it is framed specifically within the context of the U.S. Army. The secondary questions sought only to identify programs, practices, and activities that contribute to the tactical and strategic success foreign security force development. The primary research question now asks, “what can the army do?” The answer guides the project toward the overall research objective: to generate specific, actionable recommendations for the U.S. Army. Some of these answers constitute clearly defined policy changes, while others suggest broader cultural changes and institutional positioning. In some broader suggestions, the U.S. Army may already execute the recommendations to some degree. In these cases, the research serves only to amplify the importance of these activities going forward. To develop partnered militaries, ensuring both enduring military success and security partnership, the U.S. Army can: push for clearly defined objectives prior to beginning an FSFD mission, position itself as the FSFD authority in the U.S. Government, plan to execute long-term FSFD with every mission, and create a globally minded military culture through language learning.

Recommendations

None of these recommendations are simple policy changes or acquisitions. Neither does the research indicate, nor the researcher assert that these recommendations are not already underway in some form or fashion within the Department of the Army and the Department of Defense. Rather, the research indicated and emphasized the criticality of these requirements and suggests that some of them may indeed be prerequisites to success. Firstly, Army Service Component Commands within the Combatant Commands should support and shape military objectives through the Department of Defense and Other Government Agencies. Military commanders should be able to effectively convey the limitations of foreign security force development to civilian leadership. This ability to convey Army capabilities requires active planning prior to the need of such a mission. Foreign security force development should be planned in conjunction with theater campaign planning, forcing a constantly updated analysis of existing and potential partners. Such plans could be organized as contingency plans within the theater campaign or as appendices within other security cooperation missions.

In order to shape these missions and military objectives effectively, the U.S. Army must position itself as the authority on foreign security force development in the government. The U.S. Army maintains this authority in a de facto status based on its historical and recent experiences but building a reputation as the leader in the field of developing partnered militaries will require greater academic and organizational investment. Creating permanent SFABs was an initial step, but the U.S. Army would need to dedicate significant institutional energy to this effort to truly earn the acumen

required. Such an investment may take the form of an expanded Military Advisor Training Academy at Fort Benning, Georgia or establishment of a department or research organization within Army University or the Army War College. In summary, the U.S. Army must proactively study foreign security force development in preparation for future missions, not retrospectively.

Finally, the U.S. Army must lead a cultural change centered around language proficiency. It is more costly, more time consuming, and less effective to teach a language to an advisor just prior to deployment than it would be to create programs that incentivize language learning in general. Unfortunately, American culture leans against multilingualism, but the U.S. Army needs to create ways to increase language proficiency as a general skill of its soldiers. By creating a culture in which soldiers are actively encouraged and incentivized to learn languages, the U.S. Army will dramatically increase its flexibility in advising regardless of where the mission takes place.

While the U.S. Army cannot single-handedly change the culture of the American public, it can use its unique authority over its members to contribute to change in a positive direction. Critical language incentives sought to increase the population of linguists throughout the service but failed to utilize them in a way that justified the expense. A Soldier that speaks Mandarin does not benefit the U.S. Army if they are serving as a cook on a basic training post. However, by cancelling this program and establishing the interpreter military occupational specialty (09L), the U.S. Army undermined the key benefit of this initiative and again restricted language incentives to the very few.

As the U.S. Army continues to develop its talent management through the Army Talent Alignment Process and the People Strategy, it should preference personnel with identified and measured linguistic skills for jobs that would benefit from that language. As such, a French speaker should receive preference when applying for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) positions and a Mandarin speaker should have preference in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). This change could quickly and easily be incorporated into assignments either through the labeling process already in the Assignment Interactive Module or by creating language-specific Additional Skill Identifiers (ASIs) to identify both jobs and personnel. In the short term, these changes would better align skilled personnel to positions and incentivize Soldiers to pursue languages independently. In the long term, this effect would be much more powerful, it would create the expectation and desire for language skill across the entire U.S. Army.

Recommendations for Future Research

As is often the case of academic research, answering one question usually creates new ones. The U.S. Army and the Joint Force would significantly benefit from further study into several areas. The French Republic has been a critical ally for most of American history. Their operations in Africa represent a different approach to security cooperation with similar goals, ideals and values as those of the United States. The United States has a significant amount to learn from their experiences but surprisingly little has been done to study this area. Many American scholars are unwilling or unable to study foreign-language documents and the propensity for European allies to be multilingual contributes to American researchers' use of English as a crutch.

Furthermore, the specific use of language in security cooperation and foreign security force development merits further study. While this research has indicated that a shared language increases the flexibility and options of a military commander to train or advise a partnered force, specific research should explore the relationship between language and advising. How much of a benefit does it actually provide? Is it universally better or will a certain number of interpreters yield the same advantage? Which is more important: shared culture and values or shared language?

Finally, the research identified that the largest and possibly most difficult area for further study: what are the limits of foreign security force development? Through an overview of military history, research has shown that developing a foreign security force can lead to long-lasting, stable, and mutually beneficial alliances (for example, France training the United States during the American Revolution). However, there is no secret formula. Success appears to be determined by a chaotic mixture of circumstances ranging from the shared culture built over centuries of security cooperation, to the individual poverty of nations leading to systemic corruption. Any research into this topic should explore the critical question: what can be reasonably expected from foreign security force development, in what circumstances, and at what cost? Perhaps such research could yield small-scale, consistently applicable tenets that countries could reasonably apply and achieve an expected result.

Concluding Thoughts

Strategic studies are akin to studying all of the social sciences at once, with a strong foundation of history. Over the course of this research, it became clear that

security cooperation, and indeed all elements of national power are founded, defined, and executed through the individuals within the very system they attempt to study. Because of this reality, that no matter how grand of a social system we construct, we exercise it through individual humans with their own thoughts, biases, and histories. Entire nations often behave like individuals and the lines between psychology, social psychology, and sociology can become blurred.

The outcome is an observation that this research project's findings can be applied to national strategies just as easily as they can be applied to an individual soldier. To train a soldier, the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) must first know them. The NCO observes and assesses to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and perspective. The best leaders also learn about their trainee personally. They explore their learning style, confidence level, and background. From there, the NCO can adjust their training strategy to meet the needs of their pupil. He can perfect their strengths and improve their weaknesses efficiently and effectively, while creating a bond that lasts far longer than the training session itself. How many people still look fondly back on their favorite teachers or football coaches?

Beyond the individual skills, a leader must set goals. He will adapt his training strategy if he has one hour per week or eight hours per day. Once he understands his pupil and understands his resources, he sets goals and develops a plan to meet those goals. The goal is rarely to be the top athlete in the world, especially not early in the process, rather, the goal is to achieve the most you can based on your start point. And if the pupil achieves that goal, neither lament not having exceeded it.

On the contrary, the worst NCOs are impersonal. They may not help at all or they may have a rigid plan they designed without the pupil in mind and expect the pupil to execute without question. In these situations, the coach focuses more on compliance than goals and the pair may work for months without a significant gauge or understanding of their progress. If progress is made, is it a lot? Is it sufficient? Is it something to feel good about?

The same can be said of an advisor training a foreign counterpart, an Army strategic planner assessing and planning Security Force Assistance or a Joint Planner building a Security Cooperation concept. But the fundamental assumption in this allegory is one that is made apparent throughout the course of this research: the coach and pupil can communicate. Language is foundational to establishing and building this relationship for better or worse. Non-verbal communication is inherently limited and differs across cultures, making the environment ripe for misunderstanding as and even confrontation between partners. Historically, the U.S. Army's approach to this problem has been to hire interpreters, a limited and expensive resource, and to focus cultural awareness training on cultural sensitivity and non-verbal cues. In the researcher's experience, cultural awareness courses focus on how to utilize an interpreter, understanding non-verbal communication, and emphasize learning some key phrases, usually to assess the trustworthiness and skill of the interpreter. Very little emphasis is put on learning language as a goal unto itself.¹⁹⁸

While the U.S. Army has experimented with programs to increase language proficiency among Soldiers, to include the short-lived, critical language pay program and

outreach programs to recruit polyglots through universities, these efforts face the additional challenge of resisting American culture. The American people as a whole do not value multilingualism as highly as America's allies. Whether due to cultural homogeneity, geographic isolation, or historical tendency toward isolationism and xenophobia, American culture resists large-scale language learning. While students in Europe or Africa are often functionally bilingual by high school, Americans must either be lucky enough to live in a state that offers language training in public school or must go out of their way to learn the languages themselves. As a global superpower, one that prides itself on maintaining democratic values and strong relationships with its allies and partners, the United States can no longer expect all other societies to learn English.

This is where the U.S. Army can serve as an agent of change. As the U.S. Army modernizes its talent-management programs and seeks to recruit and retain the best talent, it has an opportunity to create an environment that values language learning. The process will be slow but, if done well, will build a generation of internationally minded, independently skilled and confident soldiers, exactly what the nation needs to represent the United States to the world and pursue its interests.

¹⁹⁸ The researcher taught cultural awareness for U.S. Army Cadet Command at the Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) in 2011; attended the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team (SFAAT) course at Fort Polk, LA in 2013; took required in-country cultural training in Bagram, Afghanistan; and attended the first iteration of the Military Advisor Training Academy (MATA) at Fort Benning in 2017.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Table 1. Example Data Collection Table

DATA COLLECTION TABLE				
Source Title <i>Source Bibliographic Information</i>				
Ref #	Pg #	Observation (Date)	Description	Notes
1.1	36	What event/observation is observed in the reading? (Date of observation)	How/why does this connect to the data collection reference?	Initial thoughts/ notes/ connections for follow up.

Source: Created by author.

Table 2. Reference Numbers for Data Collection Tables

Data Collection Reference Numbers			
Core Areas	Series	Operationalized Terms	#
Situational Understanding	1.0	Situational Awareness	1.1
		Understanding the effects of actions	1.2
Planning and Processes	2.0	Organization / Deliberate Planning	2.1
		Outside Coordination	2.2
		Deliberate Leadership Training	2.3
		Accountability and Oversight Mechanisms	2.4
		Deliberate Information Management	2.5
		Periodic assessments and adjustments	2.6
		Coordination between diplomatic and military	2.7
		Planning Prior to FSFD Mission	2.8
Non-Military Support	3.0	Prioritization of FSFD	3.1
		Diplomatic Efforts	3.2
		Whole-of-government approach	3.3
		Patron nation Sustainment of Effort	3.4
Information and Perception	4.0	"Key Personalities" public views on FSFD	4.1
		PN population view of FSF	4.2
		Media view of FSF	4.3
		Supporting PN ownership	4.4
		Improving popular perceptions	4.5
People, Interpersonal Interactions and Leadership	5.0	Relationships	5.1
		Individual Examples of Leadership	5.2
		FSF Actions Supporting Governance	5.3
		Police Actions (general)	5.4
		PN Sustainment of Effort	5.5
		FSF Sustainment of legitimacy	5.6

Source: Created by author.

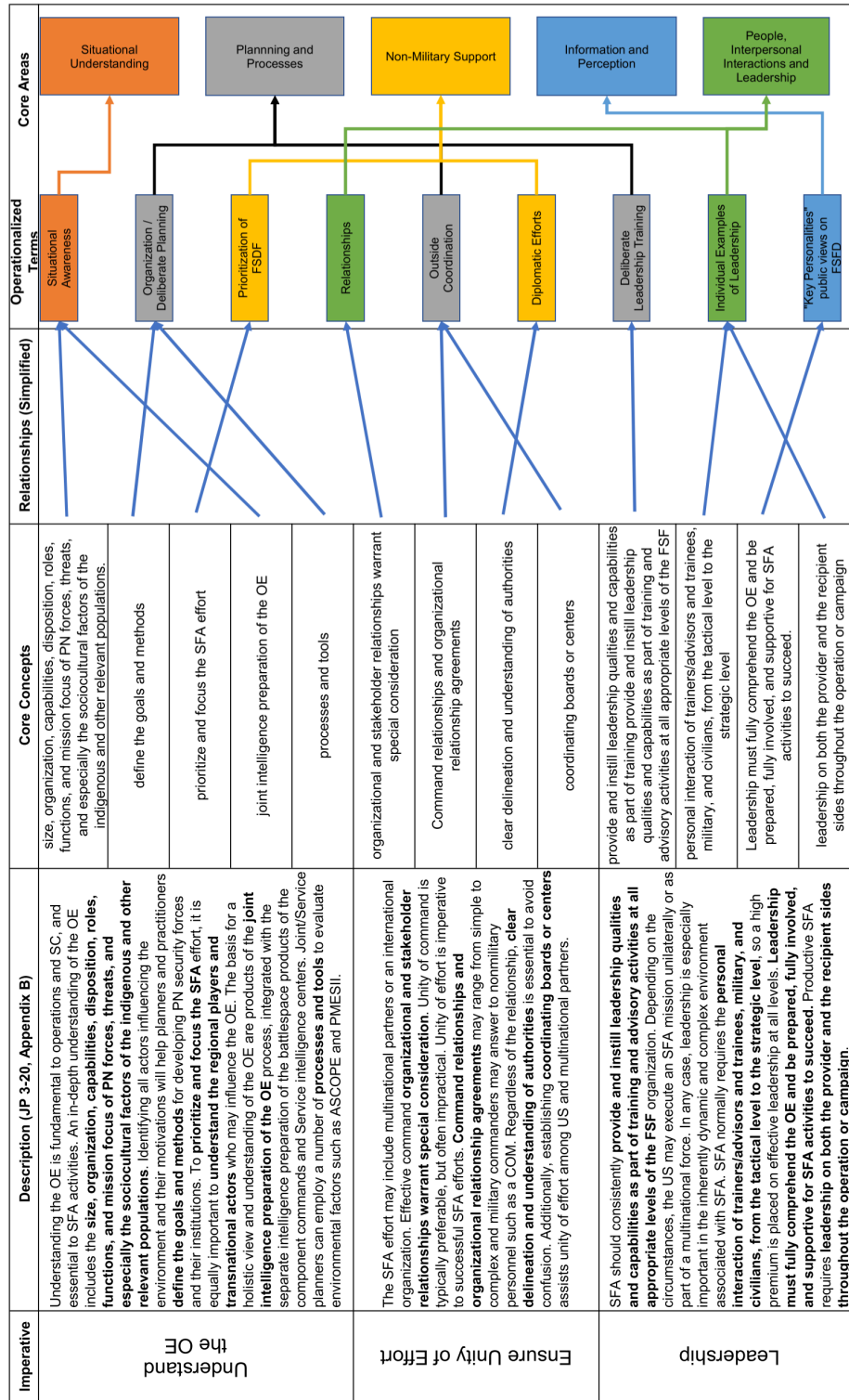


Figure 4. Simplified Operational Terms Crosswalk, Part 1

Source: Created by author.

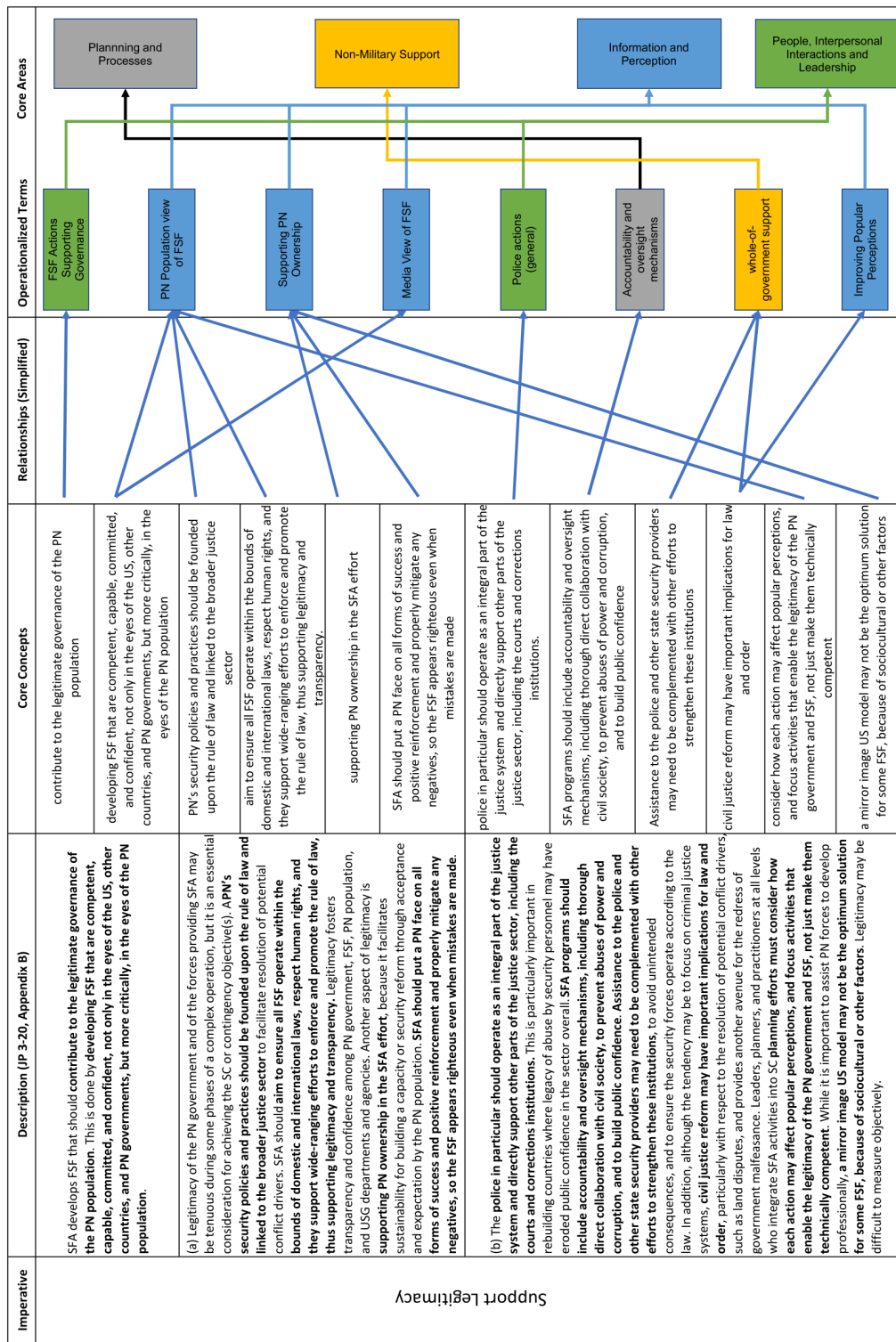


Figure 5. Simplified Operational Terms Crosswalk, Part 2

Source: Created by author.

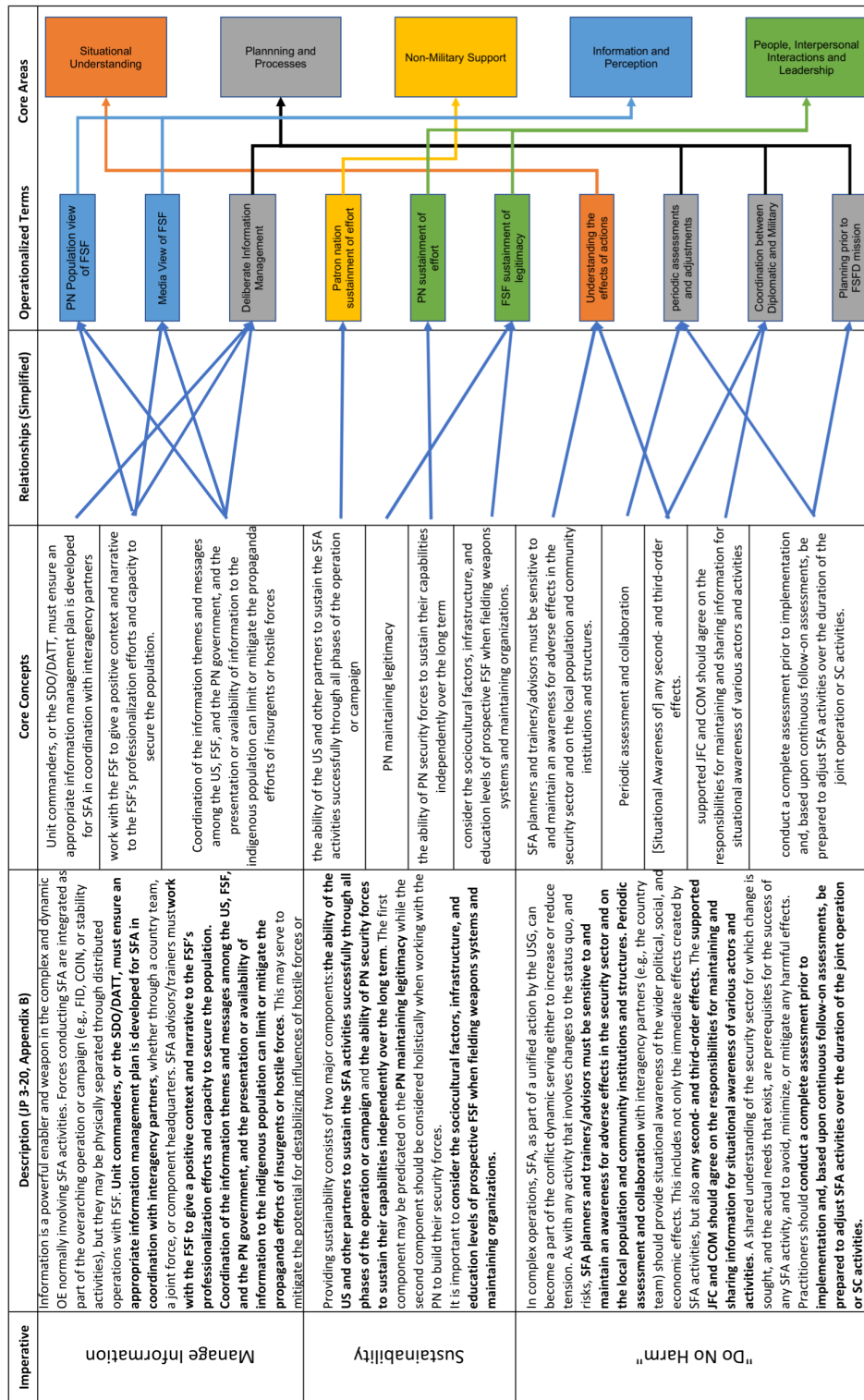


Figure 6. Simplified Operational Terms Crosswalk, Part 3

Source: Created by author.

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