Members of coalition special operations forces meet with Afghan Local Police and Afghan National Army representatives 19 April 2012 to discuss village stability in Khakrez District, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. The three forces routinely work together to monitor local villages for insurgent activity and to ensure the safety of the local population.

NATO's Approach to Irregular Warfare
Protecting the Achilles' Heel

Lt. Col. Christian Jeppson, Swedish Special Forces

Capt. Sampsa Heilala, Finnish Special Forces

*Capt. Jan Weuts, Belgian Special Forces

Master Sgt. Giovanni Santo Arrigo, Italian Special Forces

Presence without value is perceived as occupation.

—Adm. (retired) Eric Olson

The Achilles' heel in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) involvement in twenty-first century irregular warfare (IW) conflicts has consistently proven to be failure to effectively promote establishment of a governance authority considered legitimate by the populace of a nation within a reasonable time frame. This article proposes a paradigm shift in NATO's approach to establishing legitimacy of governance. To gain and maintain the support of the population in IW conflicts, NATO should apply a bottom-up—rather than a top-down—approach to establish legitimacy. Moreover, to implement this approach most effectively, NATO should change how it employs NATO special operations forces (SOF).

Evolution of Change in Strategy

NATO adopted a *comprehensive approach* (CA) strategy in 2010 that places emphasis on resolving conflicts through promoting the development of legitimate governance.[1] The strategy is based in part on the assumption that resolution of most modern conflicts will require efforts that go outside the employment of purely military measures. As a result, to unify any future combined effort, potential CA NATO partners must seek a common understanding of how diverse nonmilitary measures can be operationalized since there is universal agreement that designing and implementing CA campaign plans remains complex and challenging.[2]

This article contends that the prudent application of SOF to promote bottom-up development of governance provides the most logical and effective means to address and synthesize approaches to the many complexities and challenges attendant to accomplishing the overall objective of establishing government legitimacy among a populace in IW operational environments.

Old Paradigm: the State-Centric Approach

Unfortunately, most current IW strategies identify, frame, and address problems within the legacy theoretical framework of the Westphalian state model.[3] According to this model, states are sovereign, and power over a state is projected top down from the
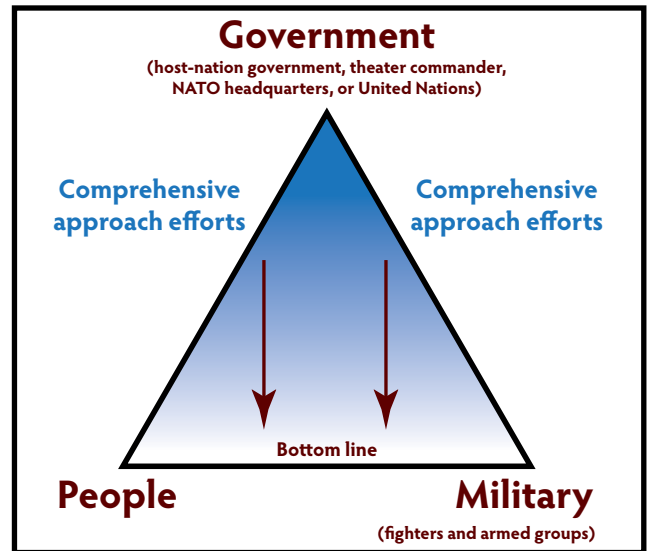

Figure 1. Modified Clausewitzian Trinity Model

government to the populace to control the sociopolitical order. Therefore, according to state-centric theory, in circumstances where the state has a monopoly on organized violence aimed at maintaining sovereignty, strategies formulated to either challenge or change the overall sociopolitical order in any way must do so mainly by effecting change in the top layer of governing authority. This approach is established on, and is the continuation of, long-standing state-centered thinking inculcated in Eurocentric NATO culture. One result is that NATO planners tend to operate under the general assumption that state-centric political factors also have primacy in IW in exactly the same way they do in conventional conflicts between autonomous, established political states.

Attendant to the Westphalian state-centric approach characteristic of conventional warfare, current IW strategies tend to identify, frame, and address problems within the theoretical framework drawn from Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian philosopher general in his seminal book *On War*. Clausewitz called the forces that define war a "paradoxical trinity," which he described as a phenomenon composed of three elements: reason, hatred, and chance.[4] These abstract elements are commonly equated with the "government, the people, and the military," respectively. Consequently, the influence of Westphalian state-centric thinking and the Clausewitzian trinity on NATO results in efforts to establish governance in an IW

operational environment that are led, coordinated, and deconflicted from the top, mostly by, with, and through what is identified as an existing host-nation government.[5] Figure 1 illustrates NATO's current comprehensive approach to IW conflicts using a modified Clausewitzian trinity model.

The state-centric mindset is also reflected in figure 2, which has been extracted from the U.S. Department of Defense publication *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC)*.[6] The models depicted in the Department of Defense figure ostensibly illustrate the difference between conventional warfare and IW. However, what they really depict is the prevailing, and highly misleading, state-centric mind-set of those who developed figures that erroneously depict the main dynamic of the IW effort as a line between the central government and the population.

Contrary to the underlying assumptions stemming from state-centric thinking, recognition of central state authority as legitimate by a given population in an IW environment is often illusory. This begs the question, "How then should NATO proceed if it becomes involved in IW in areas where there is no broad recognition of any central state authority among the populace?" In such circumstances, the consequences of false assumptions would be counterproductive as a state-centric mind-set among conventional-war strategic planners would have the effect of obfuscating clear understanding of the differences between conventional warfare and IW. Thus, a state-centric, top-down perspective that distorts alliance decision making in IW has an adverse impact on both strategic- as well as tactical-level planning and operations.

Among other flaws in the state-centric thinking reflected in figure 2 is that the relationship of the population and the fighters in the supposed IW trinity (shown on the right side) is not the equivalent of the population and military relationship in the conventional warfare portion of the figure (shown on the left side) derived from Clausewitz. Unlike the military entity Clausewitz describes, IW fighters do not constitute a separate state military (i.e., a social group discrete from the civilian population within the construct). Instead, they are likely to be an entity intermingled with, and generally indistinguishable from, the population.

The Bottom Line and the Achilles' Heel

Therefore, a recast version of the Clausewitzian trinity, shown in figure 3, more accurately depicts the key dynamic of IW conflict as between a population and what are better characterized as fighters, or armed groups, together with supporters.

For purposes of this article, the connecting line between these two groups is defined as the "bottom line" because of its importance to the proposed paradigm shift depicted in the model. However, the relationship indicated by the connecting line should not be seen as intended to accurately depict some absolute value. Instead, it is only a general characterization of the nature of complex environments in unstable circumstances where competing efforts among many constructive and destructive *prototrinities* can be expected to be occurring.

Prototrinities are defined here as emerging and politically immature locally or nationally grown entities that compete to establish relationships between the population and fighters in an effort to gain ascendancy of governance over the population. As such, they are aspiring, embryonic movements that may eventually achieve enough sophistication to ascend to hegemonic dominance within a forming state, ultimately obtaining a local, national, or perhaps regional, identity. Consequently, the relatively unfocused elements in prototrinities will, with growth and maturity, assume the character of *protogovernments*.

For purposes of this article, a *protogovernment* is defined as a weak and emerging form of government with the potential to either become stronger and emerge as a broadly accepted legitimate government or to break down completely. The common primary concerns of competing protogovernments are to find ways of enhancing their legitimacy, authority, and capacity.

From the perspective of an outside entity such as NATO, prototrinities evolving into protogovernments are of two types: *desired* or *undesired*. Both types have the potential for establishing themselves as the prevailing government entity. Irrespective, both need to be nurtured to become complete and hegemonic.

Desired governance, for purposes of this article, is a form of civil administration that is sympathetic to United Nations or NATO coalition objectives, that enjoys local or national legitimacy, and that has

Conventional Warfare

Effect Desired: Influence Government

Government

Focus

Bottom line

Population

Army

Effect Desired: Isolate from Conflict and the Military

Effect Desired: Defeat Military

Irregular Warfare

Effect Desired: Influence Government

Government

Focus

Bottom line

Population

Fighters

Effect Desired: Gain or Erode Support
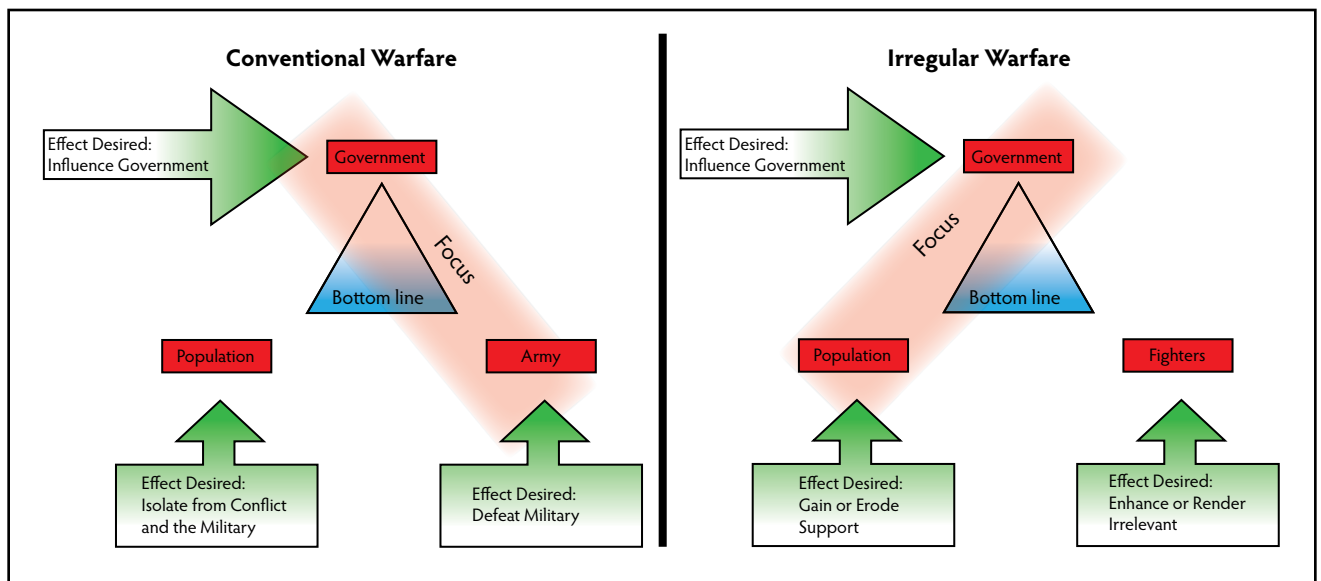
Effect Desired: Enhance or Render Irrelevant

Figure 2. Contrasting Conventional and Irregular Warfare

sufficient capacity for providing security and services. Furthermore, desired governance is broadly in line with the policy objectives of the governments of the troop-contributing nations of a coalition or alliance that have chosen to intervene in an IW conflict.

In contrast, u*ndesired governance* is a form of civil administration that is not sympathetic to United Nations or NATO coalition objectives, and antithetical to its interests. A good example of an emerging *undesirable* prototrinity or protogovernment is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), which is currently attempting to establish itself as a recognized state with territorial boundaries. Of note, ISIS relies on terror to impose its authority instead of seeking a popular mandate through nonviolent means, and its apparent ultimate objectives are potentially threatening to NATO interests.

In contrast, such undesired governance may also enjoy local, or even national, legitimacy, as in the case of Hamas in Gaza, which came to power through popular mandate. However, from the perspective of NATO, it also is undesired because its political objectives are likewise antithetical to those of NATO.

In contrast, a desired local form of a prototrinity can be found in the local governance projects fostered by village stability operations in Afghanistan, where vetted local, village, or tribal leaders were politically empowered, controlled their local forces, and enjoyed both respect and support from their people.

With the above in mind, it is important to point out that the bottom line in the trinity models shown in figures 1, 2, and 3 actually depicts a relationship that represents a much more intimate and closer relationship between the "people" and the "fighters"—a metaphorically *shorter* distance between them—than in the similarly aggregated groups noted in the conventional warfare model where the population and the military are construed to be entities largely separate, distinct, and even alienated from each other. For example, the central Congolese government, for a variety of reasons, might be physically as well as psychologically or culturally distant from both the population as well as its own military in a region of unrest inside its physical borders, such as in its Kivu region.[7] Furthermore, adverse actions of the Congolese millitary affecting the local population broaden the distance between the population and the military.

In such IW circumstances, the fighters are not necessarily members of formally organized armed groups, and the armed groups are not necessarily allied with each other. Therefore, unlike the state-centric conventional warfare version of the prototrinity, fighters involved in IW often fight intermittently against perceived enemies and on an ad hoc basis while remaining members of the group theoretically identified as the "population."

Consequently, efforts aimed at engaging the population will also impact, directly and indirectly, the

fighters and the armed groups because their membership in both groups overlaps. Additionally, vice versa, efforts aimed at the fighters will impact the population directly and indirectly. Therefore, the model depicted in figure 3 helps explain why IW insurgent or guerrilla groups often place great primacy on establishing a shadow government that aims to supplant in the minds of the population the legitimacy of the central government against which those groups are fighting.

As a result, comparing figure 2 with figure 3, the decisive area in IW and the major target for the main effort is the linkage labeled in the figures as the bottom line, that connects the population and the fighters. Figure 4 further illuminates why this area of the model is the most essential area for focusing effort in IW operational environments because it shows that the interface of factors generating the most friction between prototrinities competing for hegemony over a population is the same bottom line. Consequently, as these models indicate, a key feature distinguishing IW from conventional warfare is that, to a large extent, IW can be effectively defined not as a struggle between a population and a central government but as a myriad of local struggles for domination of the bottom line connection between fighters and the population. This is the key interface between opposing trinities contesting control.

Using the model to analyze activities in IW helps illuminate why historically ill-advised coalition or host-nation actions have so often undermined attempts to promote central government legitimacy. Well-intentioned but ill-thought-through degrading actions of a hostile nature aimed at fighters are, by necessity,

typically performed among the populations represented along the bottom line. As a result, these actions might adversely impact both the general population and the fighters against whom the targeted actions were intended. Additionally, culturally inappropriate or clumsy actions by outside actors such as NATO pose great risk of, and often have resulted in, alienating the population as a whole and exacerbating splintering along religious, ethnic, or tribal fracture lines. Therefore, such actions not only alienate central government authority attempting to establish legitimacy from the general population but also groups within the population from each other.

Time: The Decisive Factor

Added to the risk of ill-advised martial actions affecting the populace and antagonizing the fighters within it is the pervasive challenge of limited time available. Under the best of circumstances, effectively building adequate top-down governance characteristic of state-centric conventional methods is time consuming, often requiring years or even decades. However, in IW, there is little luxury of time. Attempts
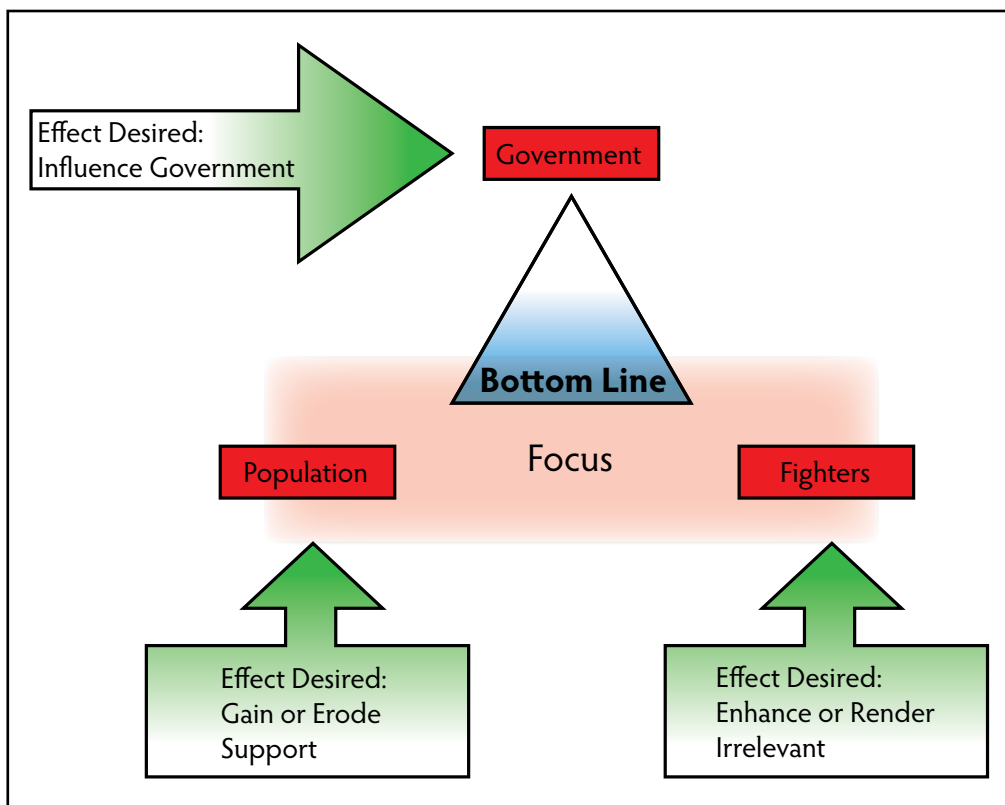

Figure 3. Clausewitzian Trinity (Recast)

at trickle-down legitimacy and effective central governance inevitably will be hampered and delayed by all kinds of friction, not to mention stanch resistance and opposition from opposing forces.

Therefore, time management is, arguably, the most important factor in IW. This is because a restive population in an unstable sociopolitical environment will likely not have the patience or tolerance to wait years for the benefits of trickle-down governance to take effect.[8] Consequently, an essential dynamic of the Achilles' heel of current NATO approaches to IW is a failure to appreciate the primacy of time. The limit of a population's patience and expectations dictate an essential need to expedite establishing some sense of effective governance rapidly at local and regional levels.[9]

Therefore, to address the Achilles' heel, this article proposes a strategic concept that anticipates the unforgiving nature of time and emphasizes the primacy of taking action opportunistically and expeditiously along the bottom line ahead of opponents to influence developments along the interface between competing prototrinities. The concept proposes expediting the establishment of *good-enough* governance at a local level as a remedial measure. This provides better prospects for achieving rapid local sociopolitical stability. This stability, if properly nurtured over the long term, can become the foundation for more sophisticated later action aimed at expanding central government authority (hopefully in a democratic mold). However imperfect, such a bottom-up approach will more effectively create the conditions for eventual expansion of central government authority in the face of challenges by other competing entities fighting to do the same than the ponderous and slow conventional top-down approach currently favored by NATO.

The New Paradigm: The Bottom-Line Concept

The broader goal of the bottom-line concept is nested in the overall objective of establishing legitimate and stable national governance; this should be the main long-term goal of any theater-level CA effort in IW. However, the proposed concept aims to achieve such governance by first enabling and strengthening local governance, rather than by focusing on time-consuming efforts to build an artificial nation-state and then striving to impose central governance from the top down.

Within the concept, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *Lex Naturalis* (the law of nature), and customary regional law (paired with common sense) are applied within the parameters of local culture and mores.[10] The purpose is to identify, cultivate, and help empower desired local leadership ahead of undesired leadership taking root to contest local control.

Additionally, within the bottom-line concept, the best-prepared forces to take the lead as facilitators and mentors are SOF. Within all NATO armies are seasoned SOF operators with the kind of language and cultural training, as well as deployment experience, needed to effectively organize and lead or facilitate local efforts to establish local governance.

Why Special Operations Forces?

Of all the forces available, only SOF are specifically trained to perform the necessary kinds of local engagement missions required. Consequently, they are the logical force of choice for the following reasons:

- A persistent, light footprint is an SOF trademark. This is an advantage because there is an inverse relationship between the number of foreign soldiers deployed to an area and their efficiency in nation-building deployments; the larger number of foreign warfighters on the ground, the more likely an "autoimmune response" from the population in the local environment, manifest by increasing resentment of, and openly expressed desire to expel, foreigners.

- SOF possess highly practiced skill sets across the civil-military operations spectrum.

- SOF have cultural and language expertise. As a matter of course, they have become experienced operating in human domain environments unfamiliar from their own.

- As needed, SOF have high tactical proficiency and sophisticated combat skills.

- SOF practice a networked approach to information collection and operations that is better adapted to an IW environment; it provides superior situational awareness compared to that of less human-intelligence-oriented collection processes employed by conventional units.

Flexibility in Employing SOF

Additionally, there is high probability that NATO SOF entities deploying on such missions will already have acquired specific regional expertise and experience in given areas of operations before deploying. In such circumstances, and in some cases, single, highly experienced, and culturally astute SOF operators might even be able to perform the required duties alone. Such individuals would live and network at the bottom line, attempting to influence the situation positively while also providing *ground truth* and situational awareness from unstable areas to higher headquarters.

Additionally, after a conflict, there might be a requirement for operators to remain for years in sensitive areas to serve as a catalyzing element for promoting continued stability operations, something for which most unconventional forces are ill-equipped and temperamentally unsuited.[11] Nevertheless, having the flexibility to provide such a persistent presence could be strategically essential for demonstrating to the people of an area the good will of the international community and a sincere commitment to "see it through."

Therefore, the combination of clear NATO or coalition focus in terms of agreed-upon objectives together with SOF competencies has great prospect of producing in a much shorter time frame local stability in IW situations than has previously been experienced elsewhere. This stems from early establishment of an interim "better" governing authority rapidly as opposed to the current approach that results in a population having to live through a period of prolonged lack of governance amidst the slow-rolling turbulence and uncertainty that now characteristically exist when local populations are asked to await the development of more time-consuming formal, national authority in the face of enemy threats.

Early experiences of popular rejection during coalition attempts to impose central governance on the populations of both Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the problems with the top-down approach.

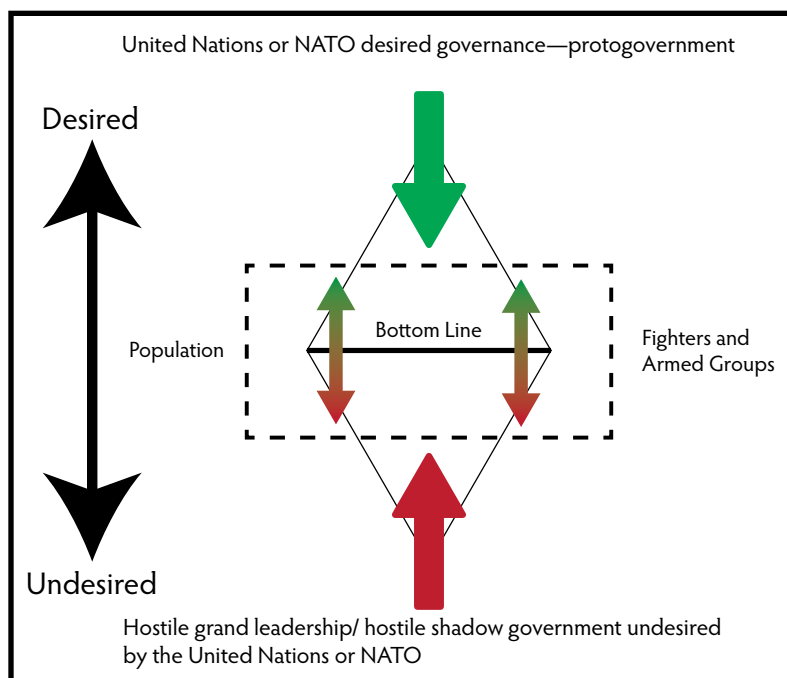Moreover, in the long term, the bottom-up approach recommended will provide a firmer foundation for later follow-on efforts to broaden the influence of centralized governance and promote democratization at a national level than the methodology currently practiced. The bottom-up approach suggested would utilize Maslow's hierarchy of needs to expedite formation of local, respected, and desired governance that also promotes the legitimacy of, and confidence in, civil government in general.[12]

Figure 4. Competing Dynamics between Prototrinities

Diagram labels:
- United Nations or NATO desired governance—protogovernment
- Desired
- Undesired
- Population
- Bottom Line
- Fighters and Armed Groups
- Hostile grand leadership/ hostile shadow government undesired by the United Nations or NATO

Deconfliction

The conventional approach to promoting national governance and implementation of the proposed use of SOF to promote local solutions to governance may tend to be at odds and will have to be closely synchronized. During the initial stages of previous efforts to foster local governance, the bottom-up efforts of SOF working at the same time as the top-down efforts by conventional forces to establish national sovereignty were not necessarily linked and,

unless carefully deconflicted, actually worked at cross purposes.

Bearing past experience in mind, unstable circumstances in IW situations of the future might make an initial connection between the two efforts impossible, or even undesirable. Factors at odds may include conventional approaches that emphasize undue haste to establish immediate stability, resulting in imprudently providing support to weak or corrupt governments that have already lost the confidence of the people they are supposed to be governing. Such loss of legitimacy for a central government in the eyes of the people might result from illegitimate, counterproductive, or corrupt behavior of national agencies, armies, and police forces. It might also result from the physical inability of a nominal central government to exercise sovereignty, provide security, or provide services due to such factors as a lack of resources, infrastructure incapable of providing internal transport, or a weak national communications network.

Therefore, imprudent hastiness in providing support to prop up unpopular regimes may undermine the population's confidence in the government together with the intentions of NATO, as the population may see NATO forces as complicit in supporting an ineffectual, or even oppressive, central government.

Consequently, the deconfliction and synchronization of conventional national-level, top-down activities with SOF networked efforts being applied at the bottom line are essential. Such coordination would best be performed at theater level through the Special Operations Component Command or a comparable architecture. The role of the Special Operations Component Command in this process should entail the following:

- working to clarify overall strategic objectives and milestones
- synchronizing and deconflicting efforts executed at the bottom line with national-level initiatives to achieve overall strategic objectives
- augmenting entities dealing with bottom-line initiatives with theater or specialist support
- coordinating the exchange and dissemination of intelligence, as well as population atmospherics, to ensure top-down, lateral, and bottom-up situational awareness

- integrating efforts: closely evaluating and tying top-down, pyramidal-structure, government-building efforts to the SOF-networked local effort directed at influencing governance being formed at the bottom line

In doing such deconfliction, the theater-level command should carefully consider second- and third-order effects before executing operations. Preparation should include negotiating prospective bottom-up, lateral, and top-down efforts. This process is critical, with patience and diplomacy of paramount importance. As noted, uninformed or ill-conceived conventional, top-down approaches too often have ignored the counterproductive effects of trying to bolster what the populace views as an illegitimate political regime.

In contrast, the recommended SOF approach functions on the premise that local governance does not initially require the same infrastructure or mechanisms of control that national governance requires. Consequently, SOF would aim to focus their efforts on reconciling simultaneously the bottom corners of the triangle connected by the bottom line, the populace and fighters. Thus, the concept operates under the critical assumption that SOF efforts must be a symbiotic *whole community* approach open to adjustment, flexibility, and compromise. This is so that efforts can remain balanced, promoting constructive local governance that incorporates the views, concerns, and participation of the local population while co-opting—or neutralizing entirely—the influence of fighters within that population.

In this way, the elements in the trinity model depicted in figures 2, 3, and 4 are ultimately reconciled, brought back into equilibrium, and stabilized. Furthermore, this SOF modus operandi transparently communicates the friendly and constructive intent of the presence of NATO forces to the local population, acting in a de facto manner as a kind of promotional information operation effort in its own right.

Opportunity-Exploiting Networked Operations

Since there may be no other CA actors in any given IW operational environment to which SOF may be deployed, the SOF elements have the capability of adopting an opportunity-exploiting mind-set. This approach may require a mix of constructive

and destructive actions guided by direct and indirect approaches in an environment constrained by very limited resources.

The *opportunity-exploiting networked operations* of SOF in such environments employ connectivity and synchronization among local social, political, and economic SOF lines of effort, augmented by additional outside support. Capitalizing on SOF cultural training, linguistic training, and personal engagement experience, required actions identified in lines of effort are effected primarily through a SOF specialty skill: interpersonal face-to-face engagements. However, in executing such engagement missions, SOF may also need back-up support from heavier military forces, as well as from all available forms of communication and web-based means, including reach-back to subject matter experts and provision of various resources that can be leveraged for developing interpersonal relationships.

Opportunity-exploiting networked operations can therefore be defined as a network-heavy form of SOF operations that combines constructive and destructive actions. These actions are determined by balancing direct action and indirect action thinking within a comprehensive approach mind-set. Elements of opportunity-exploiting networked operations are further described as follows:

- Direct action destructive operations imply the use of, or threat of using, weapons; the objective warrants the use of weapons.

- Indirect action constructive operations are traditionally the realm of "soft" forces such as civil-military operations, psychological operations, information operations, and military humanitarian missions. In constructive operations, the objective precludes the use of weapons.

- Direct operations are performed by the SOF direct action entity proper.

- Indirect operations are performed by SOF entities applying effects and influence "by, with, and through" others.

Superimposing the direct, indirect, destructive, and constructive options on a graph results in four quadrants, each containing an option set. These option sets are depicted in figure 5, the Special Operations

Forces Options Box. Examples of activities in each quadrant are noted below.

Q-1 (Direct-destructive). A SOF entity could conduct a direct action mission on a target to destroy an undesired group of fighters or a deliberate detention operation to arrest a wanted war criminal.

Q-2 (Direct-constructive). A SOF entity might perform key leader engagements or medical outreach programs.

Q-3 (Indirect-destructive). A SOF entity could train and equip local armed forces so those forces became capable of fighting insurgents unassisted.

Q-4 (Indirect-constructive.) A SOF entity might use its influence to address local governance issues or to address an issue of humanitarian concern with a nongovernmental organization.

To accomplish the mission of promoting local governance, SOF will project and transplant their existing network where needed, tie it to local networks, and then expand it. This approach adopts and modifies what is commonly referred to as *ink spot* strategy, which strives to establish a number of small safe areas dispersed over a given region of instability
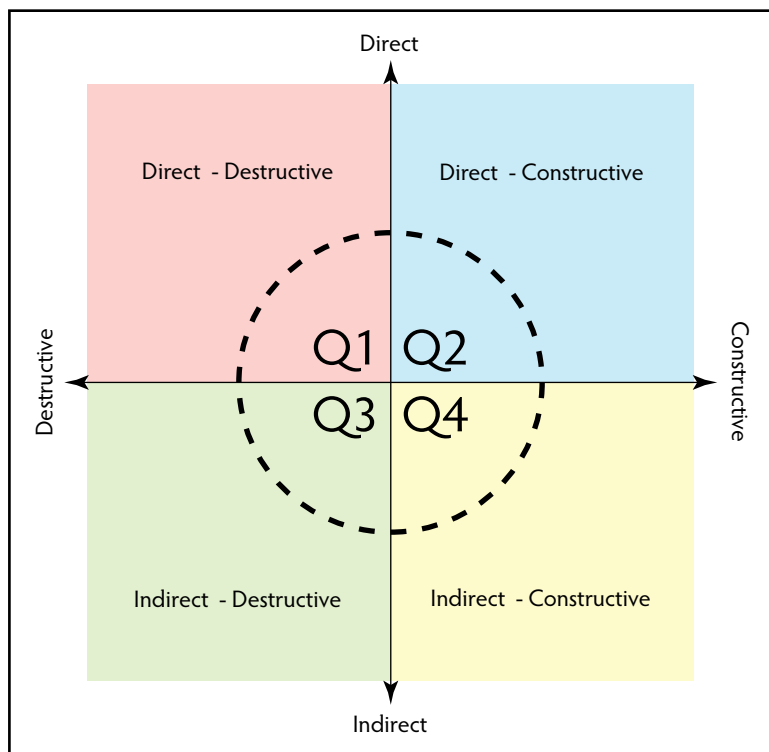

Figure 5. Special Operations Forces Options Box

and then expand their influence. The application of SOF at the bottom line provides ink spots of local stability over a wide geographical area, developed with an emphasis on local governance. This strategy then extends local governance out from each area, enabling the establishment of local government control together with locally organized security to establish stability. The eventual goal of the strategy is to consolidate and pacify large areas by first connecting established ink spots, leaving progressively fewer pockets of resistance to be dealt with individually as broad regional stability is established. Thus, conceptually, successful SOF efforts at the bottom line provide the basis for rapid proliferation of such ink spots of local stability. These spots create a degree of strategic resilience, becoming especially important if slowly developing top-down efforts are for whatever reason stymied.

SOF Applied at the Bottom Line: A Hypothetical Diamond Model of Competing Dynamics

The diamond model of competing dynamics, depicted in figure 6, expands upon the previous graphics that highlighted the necessity of focusing on the bottom-line interface between prototrinities.

The diamond shape created depicts two opposing triangles that mirror competing protogovernments, or prototrinities, vying for hegemony over the entities and interactions at the bottom line, which is shown horizontally across the center of the image, between the two triangles. The top triangle depicts the emerging governance that would be desired by NATO and coalition forces; the bottom (inverse) triangle depicts the undesired governance.

The entities and relationships within each triangle are competing with those in the other triangle, to take control over the whole. The concept proposed in this article suggests that SOF act at the interface of *both* triangles in a symbiotic and balanced manner that simultaneously addresses both the fighters and the population along the bottom line.

At the right of the diamond is a line representing *time and effort*. This line is key to the concept. A small triangle inside each large triangle indicates a local form of governance (desired or undesired), with the numeral 9 placed at the vertex angle (the top). The local nature of

the protogovernment represented by the small triangle means that this form of governance can be established rapidly and relatively easily. The time and effort line illustrates that SOF applied at the bottom line can therefore quite rapidly—within months—achieve local stability and *desired* local governance.

The larger triangles reflecting desired or undesired national governance would typically take much longer (years to decades). As previously noted, the relatively unfocused elements in prototrinities with the passage of time are redefined in this figure as protogovernments. Figure 6 briefly depicts the dynamics that can happen in the diamond model in IW. As such, it can be regarded as an analytical tool to depict a given situation.

The numbers refer to locations on the graphic that describe the different dynamics that might occur simultaneously. Some also describe what lines of effort for SOF should relate to conventional lines of effort.

1. Locally championed initiatives, receiving SOF advisory, financial, and labor support. These are integrated civil-military efforts applied at the bottom line, fostering legitimacy and creating the potential for local governance. They have significant potential for quick success. For example, in an effort to improve hygiene conditions, a latrine-digging program is set up, with consent and support from the population and the fighters. Local assets suffice for such projects. As a result, the population and some fighters are more likely to "buy in," as they own the project.

2. Fostering national government legitimacy. This refers to integrated efforts applied at the bottom line that are specifically intended to foster national legitimacy and increase the potential for national government acceptance at the bottom line. These will typically take a good deal of time and effort. For example, in an effort to improve hygiene conditions, a sewer system is built with national support and the consent of the population and the fighters. Successes in this area open the possibility of longer-term effects as growing acceptance of outside central government involvement in local affairs overcomes even entrenched resistance.

3. Unsolicited outside efforts applied at the population. Although potentially effective, unsolicited efforts to help the population do not necessarily lead to legitimacy of the effort, nor do they increase the potential for local or national governance. Unsolicited effort has the

potential to be effective, but it is not efficient. For example, a nongovernmental organization vaccinates cattle without leaders' or owners' consent. Although this measure is effective—fewer cattle will become sick or die—it does not add to legitimacy to local governance.

4. Governmental or coalition unsolicited outside efforts directed at the fighters. Although potentially effective in the short run, unsolicited efforts to help fighters may not necessarily lead to legitimacy of the effort in the eyes of the local populace. Nor do they increase the potential for local or national governance. For example, a coalition Army unit trains and equips a local police unit without consulting with local leaders or vetting training candidates. The effort risks being inefficient if the wrong candidates are selected, and it could be counterproductive if the new police force misuses its newly acquired capabilities to favor one group over another or engages in corruption backed by its new weapons and policing systems. Such a circumstance degrades the central government's legitimacy and fosters resentment, which is easily translated into defiance or even violent rebellion.

5. Negative symbiotic efforts applied at the bottom line, fostering hostile or undesired forces' local legitimacy and the potential for local "shadow" governance. Symbiotic efforts are efforts applied in a balanced way on both the population and the fighters. For example, hostile warlords provide economic incentives to win over large parts of the population. This bolstered, but undesired legitimacy, when combined with the military power of undesired armed groups, increases the likelihood of undesired local governance.

6. Symbiotic efforts applied at the bottom line, fostering hostile or undesired forces' legitimacy and increasing the potential for national or transnational hostile or negative rule. Good examples of this are the successful, symbiotically addressed, comprehensive

1. Locally championed initiatives, receiving SOF advisory, financial, and labor support
2. Fostering national government legitimacy
3. Unsolicited outside effort applied at the population
4. Governmental or coalition unsolicited outside efforts directed at the fighters
5. Negative symbiotic efforts applied at the bottom line, fostering hostile or negative forces' local legitimacy and potential for local shadow governance
6. Symbiotic effort applied at the bottom line, fostering hostile or negative forces' legitimacy and increasing the potential for national or transnational hostile or negative rule
7. Independent effort by the population
8. Independent effort by the fighters
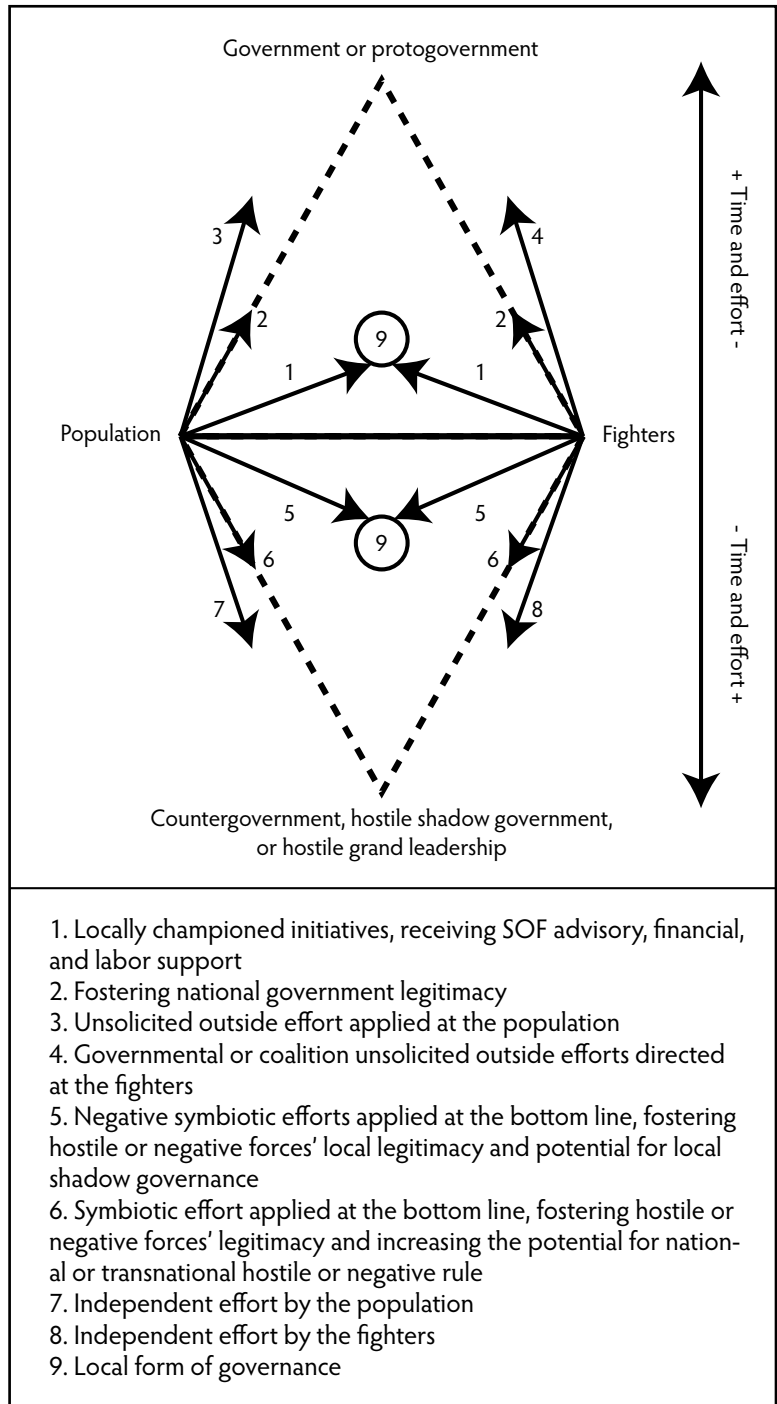9. Local form of governance

Figure 6. The Diamond Model of Competing Dynamics

approach of Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and the Gaza strip respectively.

7. Independent efforts by the population. Individuals or small groups of people, whose intention is only survival, sometimes act in ways, often

criminal, that are counterproductive to the formation or establishment of local or national governance. For example, a father desperate to feed his family resorts to smuggling drugs.

8. Independent efforts by renegade groups of fighters. Small numbers of fighters sometimes break off from the larger countergovernment groups, or arise from disparate factions, to fight for survival under renegade leadership. For example, fighters who find that they cannot meet the personal needs of their own families, while in league with larger countergovernment organizations, resort to gang activity.

9. Local form of governance. Either desired or undesired, because of its local nature, fledgling local governance can be established rapidly and relatively easily.

Conclusion

In IW, failure to expeditiously build government legitimacy to speed stability is indeed the Achilles' heel of NATO. The proposed IW strategy shifts the focus for SOF from the government-population line toward the population-fighters' line, which has been labelled the *bottom line*. The proposed paradigm shift for NATO SOF is rooted in the premise that IW will be won or lost at the bottom line connecting the population with the fighters or armed groups. Success in such conflicts will depend on rapid establishment of effective local governance recognized as legitimate by the local populace.

SOF provide a unique capability to protect the Achilles' heel by affecting the relationship of the people and armed groups, within the context of authority the people consider legitimate, all within the critical constraints of time. SOF capabilities employed according to a bottom-line concept enable NATO to address irregular conflicts with a much smaller footprint, thus taking into account the decreased tolerance for major deployments by political leaders and public opinion. Additionally, the bottom-line concept provides a strategic framework drawing from proven historical examples of SOF such as U.S. Special Forces engagement with Montagnards in Vietnam and, more recently, village stability operations in Afghanistan.[13] Using SOF to build government legitimacy from the ground up generates a great operational effect; in some cases, the effect achieved can even have strategic results.

The bottom-line concept is a true policy alternative for strategic decision makers and should be formally incorporated into NATO's strategic thinking for the future. ■

The authors were students in the newly created NATO SOF Catalyst for Change course conducted annually at the NATO Special Operations School at Chievres Air Base, Belgium.

Lt. Col. Christian Jeppson, Swedish Special Forces, has served in special forces positions from team level, through squadron commander, to unit and task group commander. He has several deployments in various international operations with the European Union and NATO, such as Kosovo, Afghanistan, and the Congo.

Capt. Sampsa Heilala serves in the Finnish Army Special Forces as executive officer in the Special Forces Battalion. He is a 2003 graduate of the Finnish National Defense College and has served as a platoon leader, second-in-command, and company commander in the Parachute Jaeger Company, and as a staff member in the Special Forces Battalion.

*Capt. Jan Weuts, Belgian Special Forces Group, is the Belgian representative in the Dutch "Center of Expertise for Special Operations." He has served in various positions as a noncommissioned officer and as a junior officer in the Congo, Somalia, Albania, and Chad. Capt. Weuts was the principal author of this article.

Master Sgt. Giovanni Santo Arrigo has been in the Italian Army Special Forces since 1995 and has served as an operator numerous times in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. He is currently an operations noncommissioned officer for 1st Battalion, 9th Parachute Assault Regiment "Col Moschin".

Notes

Epigraph. Eric Olson, opening address during the first itinerary of the Catalyst for Change Course, NATO SOF School, Chièvres, Belgium, 2013.

1. NATO Summit in Lisbon, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 19-20 November 2010, para. 21, accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf.

2. Julian Lindley-French, Paul Cornish, and Andrew Rathmell, *Operationalizing the Comprehensive Approach*, Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, Commander's Initiative Group (London: Chatham House, 2010), accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/109288. This paper lists some of the difficulties and challenges of designing and implementing comprehensive approach campaign plans; see also Cécile Wendling, *The Comprehensive Approach to Civil-Military Crisis Management* (Paris: Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire [IRSEM], 2010).

3. University of South Africa, *Understanding the State*, study guide to PLC 102-S, 2002, xvi. To be considered a state, an entity must have sovereign authorities (government), a permanent population, and a territory. The Westphalia model of a state-centric world has been in existence since 1648.

4. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 89.

5. N.X. Ngwenya, *Fundamentals of International Politics*, study guide to IPC 101-Y, University of South Africa, 2002, 11.

6. Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept (JOC)*, Version 1.0 (Washington, D.C: Department of Defense, 11 September 2007) accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/joint_concepts/joc_iw_v1.pdf.

7. Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymakers, *Conflict and Social Transformation in Easter DR Congo* (Gent, Belgium: Academia Press Scientific Publishers, 2004), 158-159.

8. Martin van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Combat from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Ballantine, 2008), 229-230. The author identifies time as the most important factor.

9. The available time is typically unknown and depends somewhat on domestic political support. Furthermore, the mere presence of a published schedule provides a definitive strategic advantage to hostile elements, who can exploit it to their advantage. NATO therefore needs a theory that would allow an engagement for as long as necessary.

10. United Nations, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations website, accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/; *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* 11th ed., s.v. "natural law." *Lex Naturalis* (natural law, or the law of nature) is defined as a body of law or a specific principle held to be derived from nature and binding upon human society in the absence of or in addition to positive law.

11. Jim Gant, *A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan: One Tribe at a Time* (Los Angeles: Nine Sisters Imports, Inc., 2009), accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.stevenpressfield.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/one_tribe_at_a_time_ed2.pdf.

12. David Ronfeldt, *In Search of How Societies Work, Tribes—The First and Forever Form*, RAND Pardee Center working paper, WR-433-RPC, December 2006, accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/working_papers/2007/RAND_WR433.pdf. This working paper provides some insights in the potential for governance in tribal societies; Ken Menkhaus, "Governance without Government in Somalia," *International Security*, 31(3) (Winter 2006–07), 77, discusses "organic" governance; David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 98, discusses building efforts from the bottom up: "Build (or rebuild) a political machine from the population upward"; See also A.H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50(4) (1943): 370-96.

13. Daniel R. Green, "Retaking a District Center," *Military Review* 95(2) (March-April 2015): 118; for comparison, see discussion on U.S. Special Forces and the Montagnards people of Vietnam, "The CIDG Program Under the U.S. Military Assistance Command: July 1963–May 1965," accessed 9 July 2015, http://www.history.army.mil/books/vietnam/90-23/90-233.htm.

MR **We Recommend**
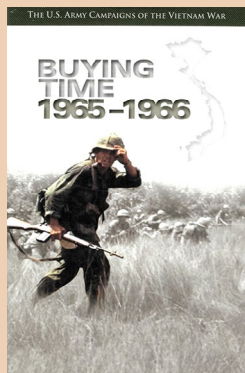
Buying Time, 1965-1966

Buying Time, 1965–1966, by Frank L. Jones, begins with President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision to commit the U.S. military to an escalating role in the ground war against the Communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam known as the Viet Cong. Beginning in 1965, William C. Westmoreland, the commanding general of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, sent large numbers of soldiers on search-and-destroy missions against Viet Cong forces. His strategy in Vietnam depended on the superiority of U.S. firepower, including intensive aerial bombardments of regular enemy units. The goal was to inflict more losses than the Communist forces could sustain. During 1966, the United States gradually built up not just its forces, but also the logistical and administrative infrastructure needed to support them. Pacification, which took a lesser role during the military buildup, remained central to the allies' approach to the war, with the White House taking additional measures to elevate its importance.