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THESIS

**THE U.S. ARMY'S EVOLVING ROLE IN SECURITY
FORCE ASSISTANCE: LINKING ENDS AND MEANS**

by

Jeremy Coviello

December 2018

Thesis Advisor:

James A. Russell

Second Reader:

Daniel J. Moran

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**THE U.S. ARMY'S EVOLVING ROLE IN SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE:
LINKING ENDS AND MEANS**

Jeremy Coviello
Captain, United States Army
BS, Appalachian State University, 2009

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December 2018**

Approved by: James A. Russell
Advisor

Daniel J. Moran
Second Reader

Afshon P. Ostovar
Associate Chair for Research,
Department of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines one central issue: How has the U.S. Army improved security force assistance (SFA) design with the implementation of the SFA Brigade (SFAB)? Secondly, it investigates whether failures at the strategic policy level inhibited the accomplishment of enduring security objectives related to the establishment of the new unit. To address this question, the thesis will briefly describe concepts of U.S. strategic thought that underlie the policy consensus to conduct SFA activities in fragile regions. This thesis will evaluate the innovation and adaption of the Army's SFA organizations/doctrine, so as to determine how well it fits into a greater U.S. strategy. It will also critically analyze SFA policy and procedures in order to identify areas for improvement. Two hypotheses are proposed with a research-based evidence chain suggesting both are confirmed. First, this thesis suggests SFABs are being established to increase the warfighting readiness of the Army, reduce SFA burdens on U.S. special forces, and secure resources to meet enduring security requirements. Second, ad-hoc approaches to SFA by the U.S. Army up to this point were in fact a by-product of disjointed policy, large resource disparities at the departmental level, and an overreliance on military solutions. As such, this thesis concludes with policy recommendations to rebalance and integrate various security programs that focus on institutional capacity in order to secure gains made by SFA.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|
| AAB | advise and assist brigade |
| AFRICOM | Africa Command |
| AM&E | assessment monitoring and evaluation |
| BCT | brigade combat team |
| BPC | building partner capacity |
| COCOM | combatant command |
| COIN | counter insurgency |
| CENTCOM | Central Command |
| CTC | combat training center |
| DIB | defense institution building |
| DoD | Department of Defense |
| DoS | Department of State |
| DSCA | Defense Security Cooperation Agency |
| GPF | general purpose forces |
| GWOT | Global War on Terrorism |
| LOA | letter of offer and acceptance |
| LOR | letter of request |
| MILDEP | military department |
| MiTT | military transition team |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NDAA | National Defense Authorization Act |
| NDS | National Defense Strategy |
| NMS | National Military Strategy |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| NSS | National Security Strategy |
| P-A | principal – agent |
| PN | partner nation |
| PPD | Presidential Policy Directive |
| QDR | Quadrennial Defense Review |
| RAF | regionally aligned forces |

| | |
|--------|---|
| RMA | revolution in military affairs |
| SA | security assistance |
| SC | security cooperation |
| SFA | security force assistance |
| SFAB | Security Force Assistance Brigade |
| SFAAT | security force assistance advisory team |
| SOF | special operations forces |
| SSR | security sector reform |
| SSA | security sector assistance |
| USARAF | U.S. Army Africa |

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On day one of my studies at the Naval Postgraduate School, the staff clearly indicated that writing a thesis would be a long road that requires time, dedication, and a commitment to the process. I could not agree more. What I would add to this notion is that such a commitment also requires a foundation on which to succeed. My family is that foundation. I would like to thank my family and loved ones for their support, patience, and encouragement, all of which led me to apply to and attend the Naval Postgraduate School. Without them I would not be here. Therefore, I dedicate this work to them.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis examines one central issue: How has the U.S. Army improved security force assistance (SFA) design with the implementation of the SFA Brigade (SFAB), and, secondarily, investigates whether failures at the strategic policy level inhibited the accomplishment of enduring security objectives related to the establishment of the new unit.

To address this question, the thesis will briefly describe concepts of U.S. strategic thought that underlay the policy consensus to conduct SFA activities. This thesis will evaluate the innovation/adaption of the Army's SFA organizations/doctrine, so as to determine how well it fits into a greater U.S. strategy. It will also identify and assess existing weaknesses of SFA policy and plans in order to identify areas for improvement.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Since 9/11 the U.S. Army has increasingly been involved in conflicts around the globe. The rise of international terrorist networks, indigenous insurgencies, and lack of governance in fragile regions coupled with the overwhelming costs of massive U.S. military deployments have signaled the need for a new approach to protect and further U.S. interests around the world. Building partner capacity (BPC), defense institution building (DIB), security cooperation (SC), security assistance (SA), theater security cooperation (TSC), and security force assistance (SFA) have become slogans connected to developing a variety of different activities that are meant to protect U.S. interests. There are many institutional stakeholders involved: The Department of State (DoS), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Treasury (DoT), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.AID), to name a few. This thesis will focus on the DoD's role in BPC—specifically SFA and the Army's role.

The U.S. Army has been the primary Military Department (MILDEP) utilized to build foreign militaries and defense institutions in order to establish long term stability,

prevent attacks on the homeland, and promote peace in regions thought to be critical to U.S. interests. The U.S. Army has routinely turned to its general-purpose forces (GPF) and brigade combat teams (BCT) to accomplish these missions; this thesis will investigate conventional military readiness shortfalls and training challenges due in large part to the overutilization of GPF for SFA purposes. To be sure, the U.S. Army's methods at SFA have evolved over time and have been exceedingly ad hoc in nature—arguably leading to unintended policy outcomes and undermining the Army's war-fighting readiness.

While U.S. Soldiers effectively train foreign militaries and achieve tactical success, high-level policymakers and political leaders need to properly assess progress and confirm intent/interest alignment with foreign governments with which we partner to ensure these efforts have long term benefits. Implications of poor SFA policy and plans can have unintended destabilizing effects in fragile regions and can also reduce the overall readiness of the Army.

The recent and tragic loss of four U.S. Army Soldiers in Niger has called great attention to SFA activities by policymakers at the highest levels.¹ With SFA activities coming under scrutiny, the U.S. Army announced the creation of the SFA Brigade (SFAB) concept in February 2017.² The Army will field six SFABs with the first two focusing on the Middle East and with subsequent SFABs activating and focusing on the Pacific, Africa, and Europe. As a permanent addition to the U.S. Army, the SFAB are intended to meet strategic objectives of the National Security Strategy (NSS).³ The full extent and effectiveness of the SFABs has yet to be measured as the first SFAB arrived in Kabul in

¹ Department of Defense, 2018, *Oct 2017 Niger Ambush Summary of Investigation*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, https://dod.defense.gov/portals/1/features/2018/0418_niger/img/Oct-2017-Niger-Ambush-Summary-of-Investigation.pdf, 1.

² Connie Lee, "Senior Strategist Highlights Security Force Assistance Brigade Benefits," *InsideDefense.Com's SitRep; Arlington*, April 20, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1889700489/abstract/D29D743CEA5B4ADAPQ/1>.

³ Lee, "Senior Strategist Highlights Security Force Assistance Brigade Benefits."

February 2018 for its inaugural mission.⁴ As this thesis is written, additional SFABs will organize, train, and prepare for missions.

Overall, this thesis will study the adaptations and innovations in U.S. Army SFA design with the implementation of the SFAB; it will also critically examine the strategic policies and procedures that aim to meet enduring U.S. security objectives. This thesis will outline the factors and causal mechanisms that led to this shift in Army strategy. The research proposes that vague strategic guidance and failures at the policy level have predisposed the Army to devise its own solution to SFA. The conclusions drawn from this thesis will attempt to highlight areas for policy considerations, U.S. Army SFA organizations, and future researchers alike.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The two overarching themes of this thesis, the U.S. Army's adaption to SFA missions and potential failures at the policy level, converge in many ways. The purpose of this literature review is to examine current academic and policy literature as they pertain to these themes and to describe the strategic context of these missions. The literature review will be broken into two themes for appraisal: first, the literature review analyzes strategic policymakers' assumptions and short-comings as they pertain to SFA; second, it will investigate how the U.S. Army adapted its organization and doctrine to execute SFA missions despite clear policy objectives. Terminology in this field can be redundant and confusing at times; therefore, it is necessary to briefly define key terms early.

Joint Publication (JP) 3-20, *Security Cooperation*, was released in 2017 in order to clarify the security cooperation lexicon. The strategic purpose of promoting long-term PN and regional stability are supported by a number of programs that fall into developmental, humanitarian, and defense-focused assistance. Security sector assistance (SSA) refers to the whole-of-government approach as it mandates that DoS is the lead agency for SSA

⁴ Phillip Wellman, "First Troops Among Front-Line Adviser Brigade Arrive in Afghanistan," *Stars and Stripes*, 22 February 2018, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/22/first-troops-among-front-line-adviser-brigade-arrive-afghanistan.html>.

with DoD, U.S.AID, DHS, and DoT in support.⁵ SSA addresses strategic policies and programs that engage foreign partners, help shape their security sector activities, assist in shaping “legitimate” institutions, and enable foreign partners to address common security challenges.⁶ The DoS and U.S.AID manage programs for PN developmental and humanitarian assistance. Security cooperation (SC) falls under the SSA umbrella; it provides ways and means to achieve national interests as it involves all DoD interactions with foreign security forces (FSF) and their institutions.⁷ Security assistance (SA) falls within SC and includes DoS-managed, and DoD-administered, combined exercises, arms sales, and information sharing.⁸ Security sector reform (SSR) is a program that a PN undertakes with U.S. assistance to promote effective public services such as safety, security, police, justice, and border protection.⁹ Defense institution building (DIB) comprises of advisory activities focused on the PN’s ministerial/department, military staff/service headquarters, and similar policy-making entities to develop strategic and operational aspects of defense institutions.¹⁰ Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of the programs and which programs best link U.S. agencies.

⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, JP 3-20 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf, I-7.

⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, I-6.

⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, Executive Summary, V.

⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, Executive Summary, V.

⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-5.

¹⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-6.

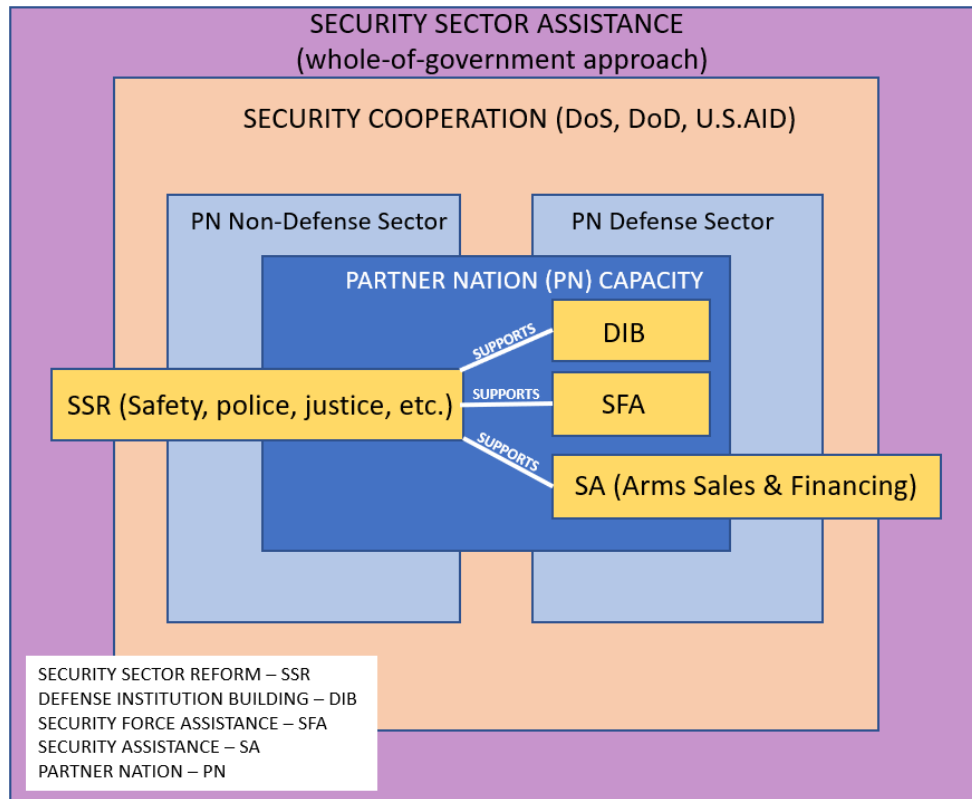


Figure 1. Hierarchy of Security Sector Assistance

Security force assistance (SFA) is an SC activity; it is conducted across the conflict continuum (peace through war), as displayed in Figure 2.¹¹ SFA can be used to shape an environment, and is tasked with developing FSF capacity and capability.¹² JP 3-20 defines *capability* as the partner’s ability to execute an assigned security task; whereas, *capacity* is the PN’s ability to sustain and replicate a capability after the SFA program is completed.¹³ SFA activities are designed to “organize, train, equip, rebuild, and advise,”¹⁴ (OTERA) primarily at the tactical unit level; ideally, SFA helps build PN’s capability to maintain

¹¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-8.

¹² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, B-1.

¹³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, I-2.

¹⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-8.

their own security requirements independent of U.S. involvement.¹⁵ In many cases, SFA must be sequenced prior to other SC programs in order to establish security conditions that enable more robust and long-term programs such as DIB and SSR.



Figure 2. Security Force Assistance and the Conflict Continuum¹⁶

Copious research has been conducted by the U.S. government, think tanks, and academics alike to ascertain why in many cases, SFA misses the mark and does not produce lasting security in fragile regions. The results of these studies often lead policymakers and planners to request more equipment, more training, and more money.¹⁷

In *Building Militaries: Challenges for the United States*, Mara Karlin explains how the U.S. trains and equips FSF with case studies from Greece, Vietnam, and Lebanon.¹⁸ In 1947, the U.S. aided Greece to neutralize Soviet backed guerrillas. This effort was unprecedented as it included dynamic military assistance and strengthened Greek institutions; by 1949, the Greek military was fully capable of securing itself.¹⁹ The Greek

¹⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-8.

¹⁶ Source: Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, II-8.

¹⁷ Mara Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 2.

¹⁸ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*.

¹⁹ Karlin, 20.

military assistance approach is viewed as a success because it did more than just enable its military. While the U.S. was deeply involved in revamping the Greek military structure and providing SFA, it ensured external actors were diminished and, most importantly, refrained from becoming a co-combatant in the matter.²⁰ The successful Greek example describes a mix of SFA and DIB, that is to say, U.S. efforts in Greece not only provided tactical level SFA, it also focused heavily on what today we refer to as DIB – a robust focus on ministerial/department level aspects.

Subsequent attempts at SFA in Asia and the Middle East did not mirror the successful Greek strategy. In 1955, the U.S. engaged itself in South Vietnam to establish a bulwark to communism.²¹ In many ways, the U.S. reversed its successful SFA strategy; most notably it did not focus on improving internal South Vietnamese military affairs. The U.S. became increasingly distracted with external actors to the point of becoming a co-combatant in a war that lasted for years.²² U.S. efforts in Lebanon failed in large part due to the U.S. building a Lebanese military that did not properly match the environment or account for influential external actors such as Iran (to Hezbollah), and of course, the U.S. became distracted by allowing itself to become a co-combatant and security provider.²³

In *Anatomy of post-communist European Defense Institutions: the mirage of military modernity*, Thomas Young proposes the problem to be political in nature. The inherent political nature of changing a partner nation's (PN) institutions have routinely been boiled down as a military-technical problem and therefore often times leaves the U.S. military in the lead for reforms.²⁴ This assumption is not only flawed, it is categorically self-defeating. After all, the state of civilian-military relations in the U.S. is fundamentally structured to ensure the military is devoid of political involvement;²⁵ to request the U.S.

²⁰ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 63–64.

²¹ Karlin, 65.

²² Karlin, 65.

²³ Karlin, 146–147.

²⁴ Thomas-Durell Young, *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions: The Mirage of Military Modernity* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 165.

²⁵ Young, 165.

military lead the effort in SFA is ambitious at best. Karlin would agree with Young’s assertion: concerted evaluation of SFA missions shows that when the U.S. becomes involved in partner nation (PN) political reform by influencing personnel and organization from the top, while refraining from a co-combatant role, the outcomes will produce a PN military that can sustain its capability and capacity.²⁶

Young addresses the ability to gauge progress of SFA missions as undermined by weak policy direction, ambiguous expectations, and unhinged priorities.²⁷ This problem can be viewed as two-fold: first, the DoD has limited capability to identify correct approaches to PN problems; second, SFA is void of a diagnostic to ensure that correct root-cause problems are identified for rectification.²⁸ The lack of proper measures of effectiveness often leads U.S. combatant commands (COCOM) to report tactical successes or other miniscule good news stories as grandiose achievements while tactical failures are not seen as what they are—policy failures.²⁹ While ad hoc programs to assist fragile states are undertaken, it is striking to see that deliberate and mature programs such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have no metrics to assess progress in defense reform.³⁰

Stephen Biddle identifies a classic principal-agent problem as SFA is utilized in lieu of massive deployments; this method is possible, “only if U.S. policy is intrusive and conditional, which it rarely is.”³¹ Large interest misalignments frequently exist between the principal (provider) and the agent (recipient), which produce difficulty in monitoring challenges and conditions for implementation.³² This combination leaves the principal

²⁶ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 194.

²⁷ Young, *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions*, 188.

²⁸ Young, 189.

²⁹ Young, 188–189.

³⁰ Young, 188.

³¹ Stephen Biddle, “Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency,” *Daedalus* 146, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 126, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00464.

³² Biddle, 127.

with limited control and promotes inefficiency in aid provision.³³ As principals become more intrusive, the agent must be reassured; this often leads to a “moral hazard” in which the agent becomes emboldened to take advantage of the principal, undoubtedly leading to “agency loss,” or, undesired outcomes.³⁴

In “The Crisis of American Military Assistance: Strategic Dithering and Fabergé Egg Armies,” Jahara Matisek observes disconnects in the whole-of-government approach that create costly foreign “militaries that are easily ‘cracked.’”³⁵ Matisek identifies the primary obstacle to successful SFA in fragile regions is ultimately rooted in lackluster coordination between the DoD and DoS.³⁶ Despite the acknowledgment by U.S. Army leadership to Congress that a lack of basic institutional capacity and political willpower in some PNs undermine SFA efforts—tactical SFA remains the solution.³⁷ He asserts the recent resource-cutting of the DoS and U.S. AID pose significant obstacles to stabilizing and reconstructing post-conflict regions in which SFA programs are deployed.³⁸ The U.S. military (and DoD at large) are called upon to fill resource gaps left by the DoS and U.S.AID leading to increases in PN dependency on U.S. leadership—as their basic institutional capacity goes unattended.³⁹ Like Mara Karlin, Matisek identifies U.S. foreign assistance to Turkey and Greece during the Cold War as a successful example; the containment policy effectively unified and resourced U.S. agencies responsible for building both political-institutional capacity and tactical-military aspects.⁴⁰ Ultimately, Matisek calls for a complete reorientation of foreign assistance programs to correct the resource asymmetry between the DoD, DoS, and U.S. AID; additionally he recommends a

³³ Biddle, “Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency,” 127.

³⁴ Biddle, 127.

³⁵ Jahara Matisek, “The Crisis of American Military Assistance: Strategic Dithering and Fabergé Egg Armies,” *Defense and Security Analysis* 34 no.3 (August 2018): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2018.1500757>.

³⁶ Matisek, 1.

³⁷ Matisek, 1.

³⁸ Matisek, 2.

³⁹ Matisek, 3.

⁴⁰ Matisek, 5.

“leader (or czar) to oversee military assistance programs, coordinating various instruments of national power in unison to achieve a specific strategic outcome.”⁴¹

The institutionalization of SFA in the form of the SFAB is in itself a tectonic innovation for the U.S. Army, but it did not come overnight. The approaches utilized by the U.S. Army have been ad hoc and reactive in the absence of doctrinal guidance due to inconsistent and absent policy. This is not to discredit the efforts of the U.S. military, as they operated without joint doctrine for years.

In *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, James Russell utilizes case studies and face-to-face interviews to examine how tactical adaptations lead to organization changes that ultimately transcend to innovative doctrine.⁴² The tempo of operations from 2004 to 2006 were quickly outpacing doctrine development. U.S. servicemembers were deploying to highly complex operating environments with growing terrorist networks and insurgencies without doctrine to effectively prepare for the mission. Despite the lack of a unifying joint doctrine, Soldiers and Marines effectively adapted their techniques and procedures to counter the enemy and stabilize the area.⁴³ With feedback loops established, tactical adaptations manifested themselves into organizational innovations as standard operating procedures were developed and a greater institutional knowledgebase was formed.⁴⁴ Soldiers and Marines were therefore conducting impromptu stability operations prior to formal guidance from policymakers. As U.S. servicemembers performed the best they could with no doctrinal framework for operations, policymakers continued to fumble the doctrine problem.

Bureaucratic politics led policymakers to disregard recommendations for increased interagency collaboration; however, the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and DoD Instruction 3000.05 empowered General David Petraeus to craft counter-insurgency

⁴¹ Maisek, “The Crisis of American Military Assistance: Strategic Dithering and Fabergé Egg Armies,” 16.

⁴² James Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 7–8.

⁴³ Russell, 191.

⁴⁴ Russell, 192.

(COIN) doctrine for stability operations.⁴⁵ Despite the DoD Instruction, some senior military leaders opposed the idea and insisted that “stability operations were just a subset of conventional ones and that skill in the latter had deteriorated...emphasis would shift to almost strictly conventional training.”⁴⁶ Regardless of bureaucratic politics and organizational tensions from oppositional leaders, the U.S. Army quickly turned one of the first doctrinal manuals focused solely on SFA, FM 3–07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, “based on lesson learned from previous advising efforts...two primary audiences for this manual are leaders in BCTs conducting SFA and Soldiers assigned as advisors.”⁴⁷ The Army defined SFA as “the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority.”⁴⁸

Some variations of U.S. Army SFA organizations include the military transition team (MiTT), advise and assistance brigade (AAB), security force advisory transition team (SFATT), and regionally aligned forces (RAF). Contemporarily, the SFA concept was utilized in Iraq by establishing the MiTT in 2004.⁴⁹ A MiTT was composed of an 11-man team with a wide array of specialties: infantry, intelligence, logistics, communications, and engineer experience that were assigned to an Iraqi battalion, brigade, or division. The ad hoc nature of these teams coming together coupled with no formal training or doctrine led to the MiTTs finding themselves overwhelmed, unsupported by local brigade combat teams (BCT), and unprepared for the task.⁵⁰ Initial shortcomings of the MiTT concept cued the advisor surge of 2007–2008 that saw a boost in MiTT numbers and the addition of a 60-day training program at Fort Riley, Kansas.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 120–125.

⁴⁶ Conrad Crane *Cassandra in Oz: Counterinsurgency and Future War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 220.

⁴⁷ Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance*, FM 3–07.1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), <https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472033904-FM3071.pdf>, Preface.

⁴⁸ Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance*, 1.

⁴⁹ Liam P Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team* (Carlisle, PA: Army War College, 2015), 11.

⁵⁰ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 12.

⁵¹ Walsh, 14.

Major Charles Jack was among the first to call for the creation of a permanent U.S. Army unit that would serve only to conduct SFA in 2008.⁵² He identified trends and weaknesses in the original MiTT concept such as a lack of formal training, size constraints, loss of SFA continuity, and conflicting missions between MiTTs and the land-owning units to which they are assigned.⁵³ Stephen Biddle would agree, “a standard MiTT embedded with an Iraqi battalion had only 11 Americans... some ISF soldiers would only see their U.S. partners once or twice a week... infrequent contact made it hard to monitor the performance of Iraqi units well enough to ensure consistent professional behavior.”⁵⁴

Despite combat operations and advisory missions decreasing in Iraq and Afghanistan, the requirement for global security remained a priority as multiple fragile states in Africa became breeding grounds for terrorist organizations and non-state actors alike. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) were created in 2009 with the task to support security cooperation operations in Africa.⁵⁵ By 2012, the U.S. Army had great institutional knowledge from years of SFA experience and announced a new concept – regionally aligned forces (RAF). The main operational construct was to align one trained and ready BCT to each combatant command (COCOM). The RAF concept affords a flexible BCT to meet requirements in shaping operations that could prevent conflict and stabilize a region; furthermore, this concept maintains years of SFA knowledge and produces culturally aware Soldiers.⁵⁶ The U.S. Army, specifically, its BCTs has maintained a high operations tempo in the realm of SFA that persists today.

⁵² Charles Jack, “Creation of the Advisory Unit in the U.S. Army,” (Naval War College, 2008), <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA484298>.

⁵³ Jack, “Creation of the Advisory Unit in the U.S. Army,” 8–9.

⁵⁴ Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 0, no. 0 (April 12, 2017): 1–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>, 27.

⁵⁵ Michael S. Hartmayer, “Security Force Assistance in Africa: The Case for Regionally Aligned BCTs,” *Army* 61, no. 11 (2011), 46.

⁵⁶ Gregory Cantwell, Tam Warren, and Mark Orwat, “Regionally Aligned Forces: Concept Viability and Implementation” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2015), <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/carlislecompendia/Issues/mar2015/full.pdf>, 1–2.

Concerns about the U.S. Army sacrificing and misunderstanding its *war-fighting* mission in the name of SFA were voiced as early as 2015.⁵⁷

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

There are significant challenges to ascertain why the U.S. Army has chosen to spend capital on institutionalizing SFA within the organization in the form of SFABs. First, years of high operations tempo have paradoxically occurred with DoD-wide budget cuts which have widely hollowed the force. Both have had negative effects on the Army by simultaneously reducing equipment readiness and exhausting the organization. Second, the U.S. Army's organizational essence has always favored near-peer conflict; the return of a decisive action combat training focus has been widely welcomed as officers and non-commissioned officers alike are incentivized for performing in this role—not SFA related roles. Third, SFA has historically fallen within the unconventional warfare realm, which is performed by U.S. Army Special Forces—not U.S. Army general purpose forces.

Therefore, this thesis will examine the friction between an increased operations tempo and the resource constrained environment to examine how the U.S. Army did more with less. It will review factors and mechanisms, internal and external to the Army, that eroded the organizational resistance to SFA. Finally, it will inspect how Army special operations forces roles in SFA have diminished since 9/11, which created an SFA vacuum that GPF have filled at the expense of war-fighting readiness. My hypothesis is that the SFABs are being created in an effort to increase war-fighting readiness of GPF and BCTs, reduce the burden on special operations forces, and forge an SFA culture in the Army that enables it to lead in this enduring pillar of national security policy.

The second problem underpins the first; my research did not originally take aim at policy but the problems are too glaring to discount. The Army executes its missions as handed down from policymakers; their role cannot be overlooked. As noted in the literature review, there is a significant problem when it comes to defining key terms in this realm—confusion emanates from this problem and manifests itself in many ways. For instance, in

⁵⁷ Cantwell, et al., "Regionally Aligned Forces: Concept Viability and Implementation," 1–2.

2006, Robert Gates was serving as the Secretary of the DoD and asserted, “in the decades to come, the most lethal threats to the United States’ safety and security...are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory.”⁵⁸ He called for the U.S. government to “get better at what is called ‘building partner capacity’: helping other countries defend themselves.”⁵⁹ It should be noted that the term “building partner capacity” is not defined or widely used in joint doctrine. As security assistance spans the inter-agency divide, key terms and definitions need to be understood by policymakers in both the DoS and DoD in order to ensure clarity of purpose when building governance and defense capability abroad.

It became clear in my research that roles and responsibilities between the DoD and DoS when it comes to building foreign militaries can at times collide and energies from each can negate progress. As noted in the literature review, policymakers and planners turn a blind eye to principal-agent misalignment and constraints, and lack proper systems to measure effectiveness of these missions. Therefore, this thesis will review the policies and authorizations that SFA operate within and will seek to identify gaps in understanding. Research will center around the hypothesis that ad hoc approaches the Army took to SFA was a by-product of disjointed policy which likely persists today.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is intended to accomplish two goals to assess why the U.S. Army is establishing six SFABs and to conduct a critical analysis of the policies and doctrine that authorize SFA missions. It will examine SFA adaptations within the Army that led to innovations in military doctrine and organizations. Simultaneous critical analysis of policy will be conducted as they relate to these military innovations.

This thesis will utilize government sponsored reports, think tanks, and Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) theses to examine recommendations previously offered to SFA planners. Some promising sources include: Congressional Research Service report, *What*

⁵⁸ Robert Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): 2–6.

⁵⁹ Gates, 2.

is “Building Partner Capacity?” *Issues for Congress*,⁶⁰ The Rand Group’s, *America’s Security Deficit: Addressing the Imbalance Between Strategy and Resources in a Turbulent World*,⁶¹ and Stephen Biddle’s report in the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance*,⁶² to name a few. NPS offers a wide collection of theses relevant to the topic: James Beal’s, “Mission accomplished? rebuilding the Iraqi and Afghan armies,”⁶³ Zachary Hoover’s, “Building partner capacity: the science behind the art,”⁶⁴ and Chris Odom’s, “Broken mirrors: tracing issues in building partner capacity.”⁶⁵ This collection will undoubtedly serve as a launching platform for additional authoritative sources going forward.

The underpinning drive of this thesis will critically analyze the role of policymakers and SFA planners. It will build on previous works cited in the literature review to challenge the assumptions, constraints, lack of effectiveness measures, and misalignments in policy that potentially lead to disjointed DoD and DoS efforts to build foreign militaries. This thesis will holistically evaluate National Security Strategies (NSS), National Defense Strategies, Authorization Acts, Presidential Policy Directives, and DoD-Instructions to determine if there is indeed a gap in SSA guidance that inhibits SFA. This thesis will also delve into security cooperation procedures at large to examine how foreign militaries

⁶⁰ Kathleen McInnis and Nathan Lucas, *What is “Building Partner Capacity?” Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. 44313 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf>.

⁶¹ David Ochmanek, Andrew R. Hoehn, James T. Quinlivan, Seth G. Jones and Edward L. Warner, *America’s Security Deficit: Addressing the Imbalance Between Strategy and Resources in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink*, RR 1223-RC (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1223.html.

⁶² Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 0, no. 0 (April 12, 2017): 1–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>.

⁶³ James Beal, “Mission Accomplished? Rebuilding the Iraqi and Afghan Armies” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/49352>.

⁶⁴ Zachary Hoover, “Building partner capacity: the science behind the art” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 97, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51719>.

⁶⁵ Christopher Odom, “Broken mirrors: tracing issues in building partner capacity” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 45, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/49357>.

request assistance, request vetting procedures, and how the process unfolds at the tactical level.

As this thesis is being crafted, the first SFAB is conducting operations in Afghanistan with follow-on SFABs in training or being outfitted. Research will stay attuned to DoD and U.S. Army after action reviews, Congressional hearings, and relevant white papers to glean insights on how the SFABs are initially performing. As a strategic studies thesis, it will primarily focus on the strategic environment, the policies that authorize and champion SFA, and the U.S. Army's application of doctrine and organization to meet national interests. Special emphasis will be placed on the implications of failed (or successful) SFA and identifying recommendations for future policy, organizational adjustments, and future academic research.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

As a strategic studies thesis, the framework utilized will be big picture strategic *ends* which tie in to policy *ways* and finally, operational and tactical *means*. The first chapter of the thesis will primarily be committed to defining key terms, providing background, and introducing my argument. The relevance of my research question resides here. Chapter II will seek to set the strategic landscape by defining grand strategy, strategic visions, examining presidential doctrines, and contemporary National Security Strategies that emphasize SFA.

Chapters III and IV will contain the vast content of the research question. Chapter III will critically analyze policymakers' role in SFA by challenging contemporary assumptions and constraints in SFA, while also examining current policies and security cooperation procedures. With the policy analysis complete, Chapter IV will tie in the U.S. Army's role in SFA as it balanced resource constraints, increasing mission requirements, and organization resistance to SFA. The research will determine if incoherent strategies and policies have sent the U.S. Army into a spiral of ad hoc SFA practices that ultimately culminated in SFAB creation and paradoxically may lead to the formations of new policies at the strategic level. Chapter V will tie the research together, draw conclusions, make recommendations, and identify areas for continued research.

II. THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

A. INTRODUCTION

Soldiers conducting SFA abroad, statesmen, and academics alike have often been perplexed as to why the U.S. engages in building foreign militaries. Therefore, it will be necessary to briefly introduce the criteria and visions of U.S. grand strategy that underpin SFA activities. This subsection of the chapter will distill the key frameworks of U.S. strategy to lay a foundation on which the arguments of the thesis resides, in Army adaption and strategic policy. U.S. national security documents are manifested from frameworks of U.S. strategic visions and ultimately guide policy. It will be necessary to introduce these national security documents, their origins, and the strategic goals that bring about policy. Finally, this chapter will describe fragile states and regions that are typically in the aperture of U.S. strategy and SFA policy; additionally, it will discuss some of the key problems associated with conducting SFA in fragile states. This chapter will serve the thesis by enabling a critical analysis of SFA policy and activities through the lens of these criteria and visions.

B. HOW SFA FITS INTO U.S. GRAND STRATEGY

Many theorists, statesman, military experts, and academics alike have debated the validity of grand strategy and the various forms it may take. The common denominator of these deliberations is clear—grand strategy is difficult to define and measure. Grand strategy will transcend generations and bridge the gap between Presidential Administrations by integrating the tools of national power: diplomacy, information, military, and economy (DIME). *National interests* drive grand strategy; the problem arises when the U.S. has too many national interests that could potentially undermine or cancel out each other.

Hal Brands defines grand strategy as the “intellectual architecture that gives form and structure to foreign policy.”⁶⁶ Grand strategy is not foreign policy as a whole—it is a conceptual framework that enables a nation to determine where it wants to be and how to get there.⁶⁷ It provides linkage between short-term policies and long-term (enduring) interests by balancing means, ends, capabilities, and objectives.⁶⁸ Grand strategy is a process that constantly evaluates its subcomponents and remains flexible to adapt after reassessment.⁶⁹ As it influences and is influenced by others’ behavior, grand strategy is interactive and exists in both war and peace.⁷⁰ Brands emphasizes the importance of grand strategy by highlighting inherent resource constraints as it relates to DIME; expanding interests can cue new threats, and “overstretch is a constant peril.”⁷¹

B.H. Liddell Hart defines strategy as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy.”⁷² He asserts the true aim of strategy is to seek an advantageous strategic situation that can achieve a decision; if that fails, then war is only advisable if it is sure to deliver the desired decision.⁷³ Even in the direst situations, “[T]he aim of strategy must be to bring about this battle under the most advantageous circumstances...to produce a decision without any serious fighting.”⁷⁴ Hart was amongst the first to call for cooperative institutions, “Frequently...European balance of power has become unbalanced...federation is a more hopeful method, since it embodies the life-giving principle of cooperation.”⁷⁵

⁶⁶ Hal Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2014), 3.

⁶⁷ Brands, 3.

⁶⁸ Brands, 4.

⁶⁹ Brands, 5.

⁷⁰ Brands, 5.

⁷¹ Brands, 7.

⁷² B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd revised edition (London: Penguin Books, 1967), 321.

⁷³ Hart, 325.

⁷⁴ Hart, 324.

⁷⁵ Hart, 354.

Barry Posen and Andrew Ross outline four strategic visions that are commonly debated: neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy.⁷⁶ *Neo-isolationism* calls for a withdrawal of U.S. foreign policy. It assumes that U.S. sovereignty is not at risk and that external threats can be contained by capable and proximate states.⁷⁷ There are many risks associated with this vision. This strategy would serve as a *massive* reversal of U.S. and international policy by abandoning long standing security institutions that were established in the wake of two world wars – both of which the U.S. did not want involvement.

Selective engagement calls for an appetite suppressant of U.S. foreign policy. It re-focuses the aperture to great power politics and prevention of such wars.⁷⁸ Balance of power and checking hegemonic ambitions in regions of greater U.S. importance are the only criteria for the U.S. to selectively engage. Ethnic conflicts in peripheral areas are only a concern if such conflicts have the potential to elicit a great power war; humanitarian interventions are only to be embarked on if they can satisfy the opportunity costs.⁷⁹ This strategy is flawed in that it violates Brand’s criteria of establishing priorities. Selective engagement provides vague policy direction for when the U.S. will intervene abroad, making it inflexible and slow to match ends with means.

Cooperative security would require the U.S. to leverage international institutions; ideally, like-minded democratic states will find it easier to work together through such institutions.⁸⁰ The globalization of technology, economy, and security interests have raised the motives for great powers to collaborate—even great powers who are not democratic such as China and Russia.⁸¹ The U.S. would maintain its comparative advantage in

⁷⁶ Barry Posen and Andrew L. Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 21 no.3 (Winter 1996–1997): 3.

⁷⁷ Posen and Ross, 10.

⁷⁸ Posen and Ross, 15.

⁷⁹ Posen and Ross, 18.

⁸⁰ Posen and Ross, 22.

⁸¹ Posen and Ross, 22.

technology and would be capable of operating simultaneously in multiple theatres.⁸² However, the collective action problem, free-riding states, and international institution credibility remain obstacles to true collective security.⁸³ Undoubtedly, the U.S., with the world's strongest military, highest GDP, and as the architect of these international institutions will serve as the best deterrent to defectors and aggressors.

Primacy calls for the U.S. to get so far ahead that no one can compete. It relies on power and views international institutions as unreliable.⁸⁴ Peace can only be achieved via unsurpassed U.S. power. This strategy disregards and undermines the international order that the U.S. established; Brands asserts that a good grand strategy “requires a clear understanding of the nature of the international environment.”⁸⁵ “Combining all aspects of national power”⁸⁶ would be undercut as U.S. diplomacy would suffer from potential counter-balancing (allies or aggressor), and the economic standing of the U.S. would become shaky as it overspends and overstretches militarily.

Regardless of the debate on which image of U.S. grand strategy should be chosen, U.S. policymakers have pursued some form of engagement and assertion to form the global order. The center of gravity for the United States foreign policy over the last seventy years has been to secure an open and prosperous integrated world economy that relies on free trade and nondiscrimination.⁸⁷ Efforts to prevent hostile actors from dominating Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf have been the foundation of U.S. grand strategy since the end of World War II (WWII) and the re-shaping of the international order.⁸⁸ Washington's “most consequential strategic choice” was critical to pursue this goal; it included various overseas security commitments in the form of forward deployed U.S. military forces,

⁸² Posen and Ross, “Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy,” 27–28.

⁸³ Posen and Ross, 28–29.

⁸⁴ Posen and Ross, 30.

⁸⁵ Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy*, 3.

⁸⁶ Brands, 4.

⁸⁷ Hal Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, January 16, 2018), 28.

⁸⁸ Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*, 28.

security cooperation that led to NATO, and U.S. presence and security guarantees in the Middle East.⁸⁹ These efforts to shape and secure global order in ways that are favorable to the U.S. have yielded both positive and negative effects, re-opened the debate on U.S. retrenchment, and potentially given a platform for adversarial great powers to arise.

Today, America finds itself in quandary; tensions from globalization and the international system ushered in by U.S. leadership has placed it “in an acute predicament with no obvious or easy solution.”⁹⁰ The maintenance of global stability is central to the U.S. national interests as outlined in the most recent National Security Strategy (NSS). These interests are colliding with revisionist powers’ recent assertiveness and rogue nation’s nuclear proliferation ambitions – both of these cases have political and economic concerns for both the U.S. and its allies. Additionally, the U.S. maintains its commitment to stabilizing war-torn and fragile regions across the globe. If the U.S. were to impulsively overreact to each instability, competitor, or threat, it risks becoming overextended; if the U.S. signals an intention to detach from challenges, it risks losing credibility—such a loss of global confidence could cue an unraveling of the international order the U.S. has championed since WWII.⁹¹ This strategic predicament prompted American policy to center around what is known as great power competition in a time U.S. servicemembers remain engaged in SFA missions abroad. The balancing act policymakers now face is building tools of national power (DIME) while also remaining engaged with SFA to promote stability, American access, and influence.

Policymakers and academics alike have questioned whether the return on investment of SFA is a net-gain for the U.S. and whether or not the SFA can actually achieve a strategic objective. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) explored the track record of SFA missions since WWII and extracted seven strategic goals the U.S.

⁸⁹ Brands, *American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump*, 29.

⁹⁰ Paul B. Stares, *Preventative Engagement: How America Can Avoid War, Stay Strong, and Keep the Peace* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018), 1.

⁹¹ Stares, 2.

sought to accomplish in the endeavor.⁹² These goals include: “victory in war/war termination, managing regional security challenges, indirectly supporting a party to a conflict, conflict mitigation, enhancing coalition participation, building institutional and interpersonal linkages, and alliance building.”⁹³ As visualized in Figure 3, they found that SFA efforts are least effective when the objective is victory in war/war termination and managing regional security; it is most effective while building institutional/interpersonal linkages and alliance building.⁹⁴ SFA efforts post-9/11 and the invasion of Iraq were categorically focused on counterterrorism and applied to fragile states; however, SFA has expanded since 2015 to counter Russian aggression in Central and Eastern Europe.⁹⁵ To be sure, SFA is understood as a way to achieve the strategic U.S. objective of safeguarding an international order favorable to the United States.



Figure 3. BPC Effectiveness by Strategic Rationale⁹⁶

C. HOW SFA FITS INTO U.S. STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

The most recent strategies have served to continue a legacy of U.S. military assistance that was championed after WWII. Following WWII, the U.S. became

⁹² Kathleen McInnis and Nathan Lucas, *What is “Building Partner Capacity?” Issues for Congress*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2015).

⁹³ McInnis and Lucas, 3.

⁹⁴ McInnis and Lucas, 3.

⁹⁵ McInnis and Lucas, 8.

⁹⁶ McInnis and Lucas, 3.

increasingly interventionist abroad as the United Nations (UN) was formed and the U.S. attempted to proliferate U.S. institutions and democracy. The U.S. enjoyed economic and technological superiority that allowed the Truman Administration a plethora of foreign policy options that were previously unobtainable in U.S. history.⁹⁷ The Marshall Plan provided massive economic assistance effort to aid in the recovery of ravaged Western European nations post-WWII. The Truman Doctrine was established to economically and diplomatically combat the threat of Soviet expansion and was largely motivated by George Kennan's famous telegram and Stalin's failure to comply with previous post-war agreements.⁹⁸ Successful atomic bomb tests by the Soviets and the Communist Chinese revolution prompted greater U.S. action. In an effort to preserve the balance of power and the status quo, the U.S. worked closely with the UN to establish NATO. The first presidential doctrine that warned against being "entangled in European affairs" was officially concluded.⁹⁹ The Truman Doctrine, along with the creation of NATO, were established to counter the spread of communism and Soviet influence during the Cold War; thus, the containment policy was born.

While the Truman Doctrine originally leveraged diplomatic and economic tools to shape the international order, it took a more militarized approach as communist threats continued to develop. The National Security Council (NSC) mandated a new strategy for global Soviet containment.¹⁰⁰ NSC-68 called for a "renewed initiative in the cold war;" specifically, it emphasized countries on the immediate Soviet fringe—not only Western European countries as previous policy covered.¹⁰¹ The NSC expanded the Truman

⁹⁷ Siracusa, Joseph M. and Aiden Warren, *Presidential Doctrines: U.S. National Security from George Washington to Barrack Obama* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 103.

⁹⁸ Siracusa and Warren, 103.

⁹⁹ Siracusa and Warren, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Mark Gasiorowski, "US Foreign Policy Toward Iran During the Mussadiq Era," in *The Middle East and the United States: History, Politics, and Ideologies*, ed. David Lesch and Mark Haas (Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 2014) Page 58.

¹⁰¹ Gasiorowski, 58.

Doctrine by placing a much larger emphasis on military power to the tune of 20 percent of gross domestic product and called for bold action to counter the spread of communism .¹⁰²

With NSC-68, obscure regions on the globe suddenly became vital to U.S. security interests. It became clear in 1946 that Soviet influence would threaten U.S. interests as Soviet backed rebels established autonomous regions in Azerbaijan and the Kurdish areas in northwestern Iran.¹⁰³ These crises cued an American emphasis in the region as Iran was “of vital strategic interests” because Persian oil would be critical in the case of a war with the Soviets.¹⁰⁴ Central to the containment policy was the U.S. effort to build foreign militaries to act as a bulwark to Soviet expansionism—this policy has withstood the test of time and now serves as a counter to the spread of terrorism in fragile regions. U.S. military activities such as security guarantees and assistance are deeply rooted in the lessons of the Cold War that demonstrated that by providing for other nations’ security, the U.S. could effectively advance its economic agenda and prevent the emergence of military competitors.¹⁰⁵ The strong interventionist language of NSC-68 has underpinned generations of U.S. military assistance that included supporting anti-communist guerrillas in Vietnam, strengthening and expanding NATO, and massive military spending that ultimately succeeded in the dissolution of the Soviet economy.¹⁰⁶

The end of the Cold War did not bring about the dismantling of this vision and framework, in fact, the U.S. military’s involvement in international affairs simply shifted from “containment to engagement.”¹⁰⁷ The Clinton Administration’s 1996 “Engagement and Enlargement” strategy directed the military to engage with international partners and provide overseas presence.¹⁰⁸ The strategy included support to democracies abroad,

¹⁰² Siracusa and Warren, *Presidential Doctrines*, 100.

¹⁰³ Gasiorowski, “US Foreign Policy Toward Iran During the Mussadiq Era,” 56.

¹⁰⁴ Gasiorowski, 56.

¹⁰⁵ Derek Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 31.

¹⁰⁶ Siracusa and Warren, *Presidential Doctrines*, 216.

¹⁰⁷ Reveron, *Exporting Security*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ Reveron, 37.

economic assistance, and increased U.S. military assistance overseas to foster regional stability—the U.S. wanted to be the partner of choice even in the absence of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹ The Clinton Doctrine directed the U.S. military to engage in dozens of deployments ranging from UN peace-keeping missions to stability operations missions in Africa and the Balkans.¹¹⁰ During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush criticized the perceived misuse of the military and contended the U.S. should not participate in engagement activities; yet, the Bush Doctrine would ultimately enshrine these activities in the form of security cooperation.¹¹¹ Even if criticized on the campaign trail, building foreign militaries has persisted and even enlarged through the Obama years and into the current presidential administration.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) communicates the president’s ultimate vision for foreign policy in which the U.S. Government will pursue national interests.¹¹² The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act mandated the executive branch develop a yearly NSS to communicate worldwide interests and prioritize strategic objectives in order to inform Congress on national security matters and to secure budgetary funds.¹¹³ The National Defense Strategy (NDS), signed by the Secretary of Defense, is subsequently derived from the NSS; the NDS articulates defense objectives from the NSS. The National Military Strategy (NMS) is derived from the NSS and NDS; it is signed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and describes the ways and means in which the U.S. military can meet objectives from the NSS.¹¹⁴

The 2006 NSS heavily emphasized the need for the U.S. to continue to lead the world towards a path of democracy proliferation, spread of human rights, and the need to

¹⁰⁹ Reveron, *Exporting Security*, 37.

¹¹⁰ Reveron, 32.

¹¹¹ Reveron, 37.

¹¹² John K Bartolotto, “The Origin and Development Process of the National Security Strategy,” ed. ARMY WAR COLL CARLISLE BARRACKS PA, 2004, 3–4.

¹¹³ Bartolotto, “The Origin and Development Process of the National Security Strategy,” 3–4.

¹¹⁴ Peter Feaver, “How to Read the New National Military Strategy,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), July 06, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/06/how-to-read-the-new-national-military-strategy/>.

crush tyrannies—it referenced Iraq and Afghanistan as champions of democracy proliferation.¹¹⁵ The 2010 NSS took this approach a step further by outlining the need to partner with capable nations to foster security, build capacity in post-conflict areas, and prevent conflicts from emerging.¹¹⁶ As conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Syria, and Libya continued to erupt and give rise to more advanced terrorists networks by 2015, the NSS took an ever more robust stance towards building partner capacity. The 2015 NSS aggressively focused on fragile states and outlined the strategic importance of building capacity in these areas of world in order to prevent conflict, protect U.S. interests abroad, and suppress existential threats to the homeland.¹¹⁷ Following the lead of the 2015 NSS, the 2015 NMS echoed the need to export security and conduct security cooperation to meet the national military objective of strengthening allies and partners.¹¹⁸ Building partner capacity is the multilateral approach called for in recent U.S. strategic guidance; in many cases, fragile states require immediate and prioritized support to its security apparatus in order to begin building other government institutions.

The 2015 NSS specifically articulated the importance of security cooperation, which has not been rescinded by the current administration. As a global leader the United States not only owns the security requirement to protect its own citizens, but also to prevent conflict internationally by bolstering partner nations. “American diplomacy and leadership, backed by a strong military, remain essential to deterring future acts of inter-state aggression and provocation by reaffirming our security commitments to allies and partners.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ George Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2006), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>, 2–6.

¹¹⁶ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf>, 26–27.

¹¹⁷ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>, 1–11.

¹¹⁸ Martin Dempsey, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, DC: Pentagon, 2015), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf, Page 9–10.

¹¹⁹ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>, 10.

The 2017 NSS includes four national interests: first, “protect the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life; second, promote American prosperity; third, preserve peace through strength; and fourth, advance American influence.”¹²⁰ It calls for the U.S. to maintain its military and economic supremacy so that it may best lead international regimes it shaped. While this NSS reorients the strategic focus to great power rivals such as China and Russia, it does not abandon the importance of SFA. The 2017 NSS asserts the U.S. will remain engaged with partners by conducting security cooperation to develop their *capacity* and encourage them to ultimately work independently of U.S. assistance.¹²¹ The 2018 NDS echoes this by asserting that while China and Russia are principal priorities and COCOMs aligned against them require increased funding, the Department intends to *sustain* security cooperation and SFA efforts to counter Iran, combat terrorism, and consolidate gains in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹²² Additionally, a review of the FY2019 budget indicates not only that Central Command (CENTCOM) will maintain its core funding, it will also be the beneficiary of new U.S. weapons programs, readiness packages, and additional security cooperation priorities.¹²³

D. SFA AND FRAGILE STATES

Assisting fragile states is one of the main security concerns of our time. Fragile states have received more attention and emphasis from the White House since 9/11. Internal violence and an inability of a government to provide positive political goods to its inhabitants are the ingredients for state failure.¹²⁴ Rotberg clarifies, “failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions...occasionally, the

¹²⁰ Donald Trump, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2017>, Table of Contents.

¹²¹ Trump, *National Security Strategy*, 11.

¹²² James Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 4.

¹²³ Anthony Cordesman, *U.S. National Security Strategy and the MENA Region*, (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-national-security-strategy-and-mena-region>.

¹²⁴ Robert Rotberg, *When States Fail : Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

official authorities in a failed state face two or more insurgencies.”¹²⁵ In 2006, Robert Gates was serving as the Secretary of the Department of Defense and asserted, “in the decades to come, the most lethal threats to the United States’ safety and security...are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory.”¹²⁶ At the time, the U.S. military had recently toppled the regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and was working feverishly to suppress insurgent groups while nation building in these two war-zones. Robert Gates called for the U.S. government to “get better at what is called ‘building partner capacity’: helping other countries defend themselves.”¹²⁷

Since 2006, the U.S. has become more concerned with destabilizing events such as the Arab Spring that expanded civil unrest which can lead to power vacuums in places like Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria.¹²⁸ The rise of violent extremist organizations (VEO) and non-state actors in places like: Somalia, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda cued the U.S. government to pay special attention to Africa by creating AFRICOM and USARAF in 2009 with the task to support security cooperation operations in Africa.¹²⁹ Fragile states have received attention at the highest levels of the U.S. Government since 9/11, as they have proven to harbor VEOs, de-stabilize partner nations, and threaten U.S. strategic interests abroad.

The problem of failed states and malignant nonstate actors is a complex phenomenon which has nonetheless led to a consensus undergirding state-building solution proposed by U.S. strategic documents which generally emphasize the need to control territory within defined borders. Nonstate actors, however, are simply not confined to

¹²⁵ Rotberg, *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, 5.

¹²⁶ Robert Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of U.S. Security Assistance,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): 2–6.

¹²⁷ Gates, “Helping Others Defend Themselves,” 2.

¹²⁸ Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran’s Revolutionary Guards* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 192–193.

¹²⁹ Michael S. Hartmayer, “Security Force Assistance in Africa: The Case for Regionally Aligned BCTs,” *Army* 61, no. 11 (2011), 46.

operating within a specified state or region; they can easily move across territorial boundaries once conditions are insufficient for their operational goals.

There has been a post-9/11 mindset and misconception among some Western policymakers that these areas require greater “stateness,” a linear, neo-colonialist viewpoint that assumes that “strong” and “weak” comprise opposite ends of the development spectrum, when, in fact, these two terms often operate in symbiosis with each other. As such, I argue that territory is often a poor metric to capture military progress in the fight against violent nonstate actors such as ISIS and that there has perhaps been too much focus on failed states, ungoverned spaces, and safe havens.¹³⁰

An over-emphasis on territory control will in many cases lead to military solutions that overlook the flexibility of nonstate actors to re-locate and even operate virtually.¹³¹ Paradoxically, cunning nonstate actors have the option to relocate under pressure, reconstitute power, and return at an opportune time; and in many cases they can reap the benefits of financial and communications institutions established by state-building efforts. Terrorist organizations and other nonstate actors require some form of stability, society, and infrastructure in which to operate to gain resources and achieve their goals. SFA’s purpose is to prevent hostile actors, whether state or non-state actors from building enough strength to threaten the homeland or U.S. interests; the task is to outsource U.S. security requirements, to varying degrees, to regional partners in the pursuit of this goal.

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to define strategy, summarize the criteria of analyzing grand strategies, summarize competing visions of U.S. grand strategy and the linkages between strategy, and, the challenge of fragile states. SFA can be viewed best as a foreign policy tool that seeks to increase U.S. influence and protect its national interests abroad at low political, economic, and military costs. It is hence seen as an attractive policy option by political leaders. Elements of selective engagement can be seen in this approach as it

¹³⁰ Lionel Beehner, “Fragile States and the Territory Conundrum to Countering Violent Nonstate Actors,” *Democracy and Security* (December 28, 2017), 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2017.1408009>.

¹³¹ Beehner, 21.

applied to only certain areas tied to U.S. national interests. Even as polar opposites, neo-isolationism and primacy can be seen in the SFA approach as, on one hand, the policy aim is to prevent massive U.S. military deployments, and on the other hand, to extend U.S. influence in ways that preserves its dominance. The tenants of cooperative security are most widespread throughout the SFA concept as the ultimate goal is to bolster alliances and build partner militaries that are cooperative to U.S. interests.

The National Security Strategies since 9/11 have placed a great emphasis on stabilizing fragile regions and ungoverned spaces due to the consensus that malignant nonstate actors can leverage such spaces to build combat power and project it at U.S. national interests – and in the worst case, across the oceans to the mainland. Yet, the fragile state problem is one that is more nuanced than current approaches have indicated. The policy of security cooperation and building foreign militaries is one military-led solution that is directly tied to securing ungoverned spaces and the territory and population within fragile states. The subsequent chapter will review these assumptions and constraints in greater detail in an effort to critically analyze current SFA policy.

III. SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE POLICY AND PLANS

A. INTRODUCTION

SFA is a foreign policy tool utilized by many nations to build foreign militaries – it is not a new concept. It falls under the umbrella of security cooperation and ultimately, security sector assistance. SFA has been used as a means to project power and influence abroad, secure U.S. access, secure vital U.S. interests, act as a bulwark to adversaries, and protect the homeland from attacks. SFA is designed to enable partner nations (PN) to secure their own backyards in order to limit the need/likelihood of a massive U.S. military (combat) deployment; at best, results have been mixed. Abundant research has been conducted by the U.S. government, think tanks, and academics to determine why in many cases, SFA misses the mark and does not produce lasting security in fragile regions. The results of these studies often lead policymakers and planners to request more equipment, more training, and more money.¹³² While the U.S. continues to throw money at the problem, policymakers fail to scrutinize the root and underlying causes for faltering SFA efforts. The purpose of this chapter is to review the critical assumptions and constraints that are often overlooked during SFA planning and to critically analyze the policy that authorizes it.

For the sake of clarity, policymakers are defined as those who direct U.S. foreign policy and strategy from the executive and legislative branches of government. SFA planners are the officers who operationalize U.S. foreign policy, specifically, from the security cooperation offices. Assumptions and constraints are both terms found in joint doctrine. For the purposes of this thesis, an assumption is defined as a belief or supposition that is widely accepted by policymakers and SFA planners. A constraint is defined as an inherent limitation or impediment in which policymakers and SFA planners must consider and take necessary action to mitigate.

¹³² Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 2.

In order to determine a correlation between incomplete SFA policy/planning and undesired SFA outcomes, this chapter will take a holistic approach to the problem. In the first section, this chapter will enumerate the primary assumptions made by U.S. policymakers and SFA planners that undermine mission performance. The second section will seek to identify constraints in SFA missions that in many ways cancel out any progress made. The third section will discuss the implications of these assumptions and overlooked constraints that guarantee the U.S. remains involved abroad. Finally, the fourth section will critically examine current policies that authorize SFA. Key areas this chapter will cover are: principal-agent interest misalignment, over-reliance on technical/hardware support, limited acknowledgment of partner nation needs, incomplete measures of effectiveness, external actor interference, weak partner nation institutions, and loose ends in SFA policy.

While the U.S. military can effectively train foreign militaries and in many cases achieve tactical success, it is likely that policymakers and leaders at the strategic level need to properly assess progress and gauge intent/interest alignment with partner governments to ensure these efforts have long term benefits. The following sections of the chapter will address the most critical assumptions and constraints which can easily be overlooked by U.S. policymakers and SFA planners that lead to undesired outcomes.

B. ASSUMPTIONS MADE DURING SFA PLANNING

The growing realm of SFA studies generally identifies various and multiple weaknesses in the methods in which the U.S. approaches the SFA mission. These problems range from PN unwillingness, PN incapability, and PN civil-militaries divergences, to name a few, all of which focus centrally on the recipient nation's shortcomings. While these arguments may have validity, we must look in the mirror; what we will find is a collection of assumptions that fail to tailor proper approaches, which in the end may lead to PN shortcomings. Assumptions permeate throughout SFA literature. This section will focus on assumptions such as: hardware is the answer, measures of performance determine effectiveness, the western approach can fit anywhere, and external actors will not have a vote in the outcome.

U.S. policymakers and SFA planners continue to throw hardware and technical support at the problem, assuming a quick fix. Multiple SFA missions have shown how this narrow approach will fail as it does not account for a broader political reform strategy; one such example is the flop of the Malian army in 2012.¹³³ The inherent political nature of changing a PN's institutions have routinely been boiled down as a military-technical problem and therefore often places the U.S. military in the lead for reforms.¹³⁴ This assumption is not only flawed, it is categorically self-defeating. After all, the state of civilian-military relations in the U.S. is fundamentally structured to ensure the military is devoid of political involvement;¹³⁵ to request the U.S. military lead the effort in SFA is ambitious at best. This bottom-up, technical approach frequently leads to a circular security problem in regions the U.S. attempts to stabilize and all but ensures policymakers are removed from involvement with political reforms that should occur in conjunction with tactical military assistance.¹³⁶ As the gap between military (hardware and technical) assistance and political institution reforms (of the PN) continues to widen, more time and money will be misused. Historical evaluation of SFA missions suggests that when the U.S. becomes deeply involved in PN political reform by influencing personnel and organization from the top, while refraining from a co-combatant role, the outcomes will produce desired results of a self-sufficient PN military apparatus.¹³⁷

Measures of performance have too often been assumed to be the best gauge for mission success. The raw numbers of PN soldiers trained, missions performed, collective training events accrued, number of weapons and “capabilities” transferred – or worse, the number of joint U.S. enablers deployed to support SFA – are closely tracked to confirm “effectiveness.” Such measures of performance led the U.S. to believe the Iraqi army was set for a sustained monopoly of violence in 2011 when the SFA mission ended. As this

¹³³ Nathaniel Powell, “The Destabilizing Dangers of U.S. Counterterrorism in the Sahel,” War on the Rocks, February 8, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/the-destabilizing-dangers-of-american-counterterrorism-in-the-sahel/>.

¹³⁴ Young, *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions*, 165.

¹³⁵ Young, 165.

¹³⁶ Young, 165.

¹³⁷ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 194.

thesis is being written, the same measures are once again being tallied as U.S. military advisors have returned to Iraq but are also serving in co-combatant roles. The “success” and “effectiveness” of the Iraqi army re-seizing Mosul in 2017 must be reconsidered as the efforts were largely accomplished with the overwhelming support of U.S. advisors, intelligence platforms, and joint-fires.¹³⁸ Perhaps the current set of measures of performance need to be supplanted for proper measures of effectiveness. It should be noted, however, the ability to gauge progress of SFA missions is undermined by weak policy direction, ambiguous expectations, and unhinged priorities.¹³⁹ This problem can be viewed as two-fold: first, the DoD has limited capability to identify correct approaches to PN problems; second, SFA is void of a diagnostic to ensure that correct root-cause problems are identified for rectification.¹⁴⁰ Underpinning both circumstances is the assumption that the DoD is the best proponent to lead these efforts. The lack of proper measures of effectiveness often leads U.S. COCOMs to report tactical successes or other miniscule good news stories as grandiose achievements while tactical failures are not seen as what they are—policy failures.¹⁴¹ While ad hoc programs to assist fragile states are undertaken, it is striking to see that deliberate and mature programs such as NATO have no metrics to assess progress in defense reform.¹⁴²

The U.S. approach to SFA that routinely involves the assumption that western methodology will fit anywhere is similar to fitting a square peg in a round hole. This assumption ignores PN culture, chain of command nuances, and other internal dynamics. The U.S. SFA mission in Afghanistan is an example of one that produced a military that is not capable of sustaining or financing the technical capabilities delivered to it by the U.S.; this ensures the U.S. is fastened to an Afghan military that is thoroughly dependent on

¹³⁸ Jahara Matisek, “The Crisis of American Military Assistance: Strategic Dithering and Fabergé Egg Armies” *Defense and Security Analysis* (August 2018): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2018.1500757>.

¹³⁹ Young, *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions*, 188.

¹⁴⁰ Young, 189.

¹⁴¹ Young, 188–189.

¹⁴² Young 188.

consistent inputs, material support, and security assistance.¹⁴³ SFA missions in Afghanistan highlight how the cultural and national wealth divide between the sponsor and recipient nation produces undesired outcomes. In fact, great disparity between sponsor nation and recipient nation culture and national wealth can impede SFA success; steps need to be taken to mitigate the differences.¹⁴⁴

SFA planners at times downplay or overlook key cultural norms that can serve as friction points during SFA execution. Western (typical sponsor nations) militaries advocate decentralized execution, embrace uncertainty, are driven by results oriented leadership, and accept failure as a part of learning, central/eastern European nations (typical recipient nations) have cultural norms that are diametrically opposed to those concepts.¹⁴⁵ SFA missions suffer setbacks as planners disregard these cultural variances – sometimes the western approach simply does not translate. SFA planners pursue objectives that are *assumed* to be specific and measurable. However, the reality is that execution is scrambled within PN internal dynamics such as: accountability mechanisms, decision/funding processes, election cycles, and fluctuating interests.¹⁴⁶ As assumptions made in SFA planning become apparent in execution, sponsor nations’ typically wear out their welcome over time and lose their already limited ability to motivate change in PN sensitive internal dynamics.¹⁴⁷

The assumption that the primary stakeholders in sustained security for a PN are the U.S. and the PN discounts antagonistic external actors. These antagonistic external actors operate as spoilers and can vary; they can be rival insurgent networks, terrorist organizations, or adversarial nations that in many ways counter the goals of SFA missions. “Spoilers” may increase efforts to undermine PN security by countering SFA missions in

¹⁴³ Christopher Odom, “Broken Mirrors: Tracing Issues in Building Partner Capacity.” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 45, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/49357>.

¹⁴⁴ Zachary Hoover, “Building Partner Capacity: The Science Behind the Art” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 97, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51719>.

¹⁴⁵ Young, *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions*, 53–55.

¹⁴⁶ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 7–8.

¹⁴⁷ Karlin, 9.

ways that cue the U.S. to become a co-combatant and/or cause violence to escalate once the SFA program ends.¹⁴⁸ One example of a spoiler is the role Iran plays in countering U.S. efforts to build the Iraqi military. Since 2003, Iran has funded and directed the activities of client and proxy networks in Iraq that have undermined SFA missions; furthermore, Iran has leveraged the efforts of U.S. SFA to their benefit. In October 2017, the Iraqi army (trained and equipped by the U.S.) launched an offensive in Kirkuk with the purpose of expelling Iraqi Kurds (also a U.S. ally), under the guidance of Iranian operatives who enjoyed employing American-made M1A2 Abrams tanks and Humvees in the operation.¹⁴⁹ The assumption that SFA missions will only benefit the PN and U.S. interests and that adversarial stakeholders will remain indifferent or not find ways to benefit is mistaken.

C. CONSTRAINTS OVERLOOKED DURING SFA PLANNING

Along with assumptions, policymakers and planners generally fail to manage the constraints inherent to SFA. This section will appraise some of the constraints that are likely to undermine the broader goal of SFA. In similar fashion to western assumptions, overlooked constraints saturate SFA literature and critiques, yet, they will likely remain discounted during planning as marginal problems. Steep principal-agent (P-A) misalignment, lack of effective institutional capacity of the PN, and little or no regard for PN priorities are some of the many constraints inherent to SFA on which policymakers and planners should place more consideration.

As stated in the previous section, effective SFA is more difficult to achieve than planners lead policymakers to believe. SFA is utilized in regions of interest to the U.S. as an alternate method to large and expensive troop deployments for which the American people have little to no appetite. This method is possible, “[O]nly if U.S. policy is intrusive and conditional, which it rarely is.”¹⁵⁰ This condition sets the foundation for the P-A

¹⁴⁸ Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Bilal Saab, “What Does America Get for its Military Aid?” *The National Interest*, (February 22, 2018), <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-does-america-get-its-military-aid-24605>.

¹⁵⁰ Stephen Biddle, “Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency” *Daedalus* 146, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 126, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00464.

misalignment. Large interest misalignments frequently exist between the principal (provider) and the agent (recipient), which produce difficulties in monitoring challenges and conditions for implementation.¹⁵¹ This combination leaves the principal with limited control and creates inefficiencies in aid provision.¹⁵² Paradoxically, in order to rectify the P-A misalignment, principals must expend additional resources to monitor the agent's work (serving principal's interests), thus, undermining the spirit of low-cost SFA.¹⁵³ As principals become more intrusive, the agent must be reassured; this often leads to a "moral hazard" in which the agent becomes emboldened to take advantage of the principal, undoubtedly leading to "agency loss," or, undesired outcomes.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, the greater the cultural disparity in P-A relationships and the longer the P-A relationship is maintained, the less likely the client will achieve sustained success.¹⁵⁵

Examples of P-A misalignment and moral hazards are not difficult to find. In Syria, one U.S. trained division commander complained about not receiving enough weapons from the U.S. after admitting that he gave half of his weapons to the hostile Jabhat al-Nusrah group.¹⁵⁶ In Egypt, the U.S. provides extensive economic and military assistance to a government that represses its people, which exacerbates grievances and can lead to more Islamic radicalization. The U.S. has trained and equipped Saudi forces that continue a heavy-handed war with Yemeni Houthis that many characterize as an ongoing human rights violation.¹⁵⁷ Clearly, P-A interest misalignment is a constraint to successful SFA that is either ignored or misunderstood and undermines the broader SFA effort.

Institutional capacity of a partner nation is often cited as a key facet of effective SFA, yet, the constraint is habitually disregarded or misunderstood during planning.

¹⁵¹ Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency," 127.

¹⁵² Biddle, 127.

¹⁵³ Biddle, 127.

¹⁵⁴ Biddle, 127.

¹⁵⁵ Zachary Hoover, "Building Partner Capacity: The Science Behind the Art" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 65, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51719>.

¹⁵⁶ Justin Reynolds, "Training Wreck." *The American Interest* 12, no.4 (February 2017), <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/02/07/training-wreck/>.

¹⁵⁷ Saab, "What Does America Get for its Military Aid?"

Ineffective formal institutions in partner nations are often the root cause for instability, however, the U.S. is not good at building this type of capacity and seeks to avoid it—as to avoid the perception of nation building (a dirty word in foreign policy).¹⁵⁸ SFA missions are therefore increasingly militarized and focus solely on hardware and technical assistance. Even if the PN successfully increases its military capacity and finds tactical success, internal conflicts may not be resolved, which will push the violence to the periphery of the nation and likely spill over into neighboring countries and/or cause refugee crises.¹⁵⁹ By consistently ignoring the PN’s institutional capacity during planning, SFA efforts only treat one symptom of regional instability and often lead to powerful side-effects that cancel out progress made.

SFA planners can easily hinder execution by ignoring the PN’s input; disregard for the PN’s true requirements feeds the P-A problem. When this constraint is ignored, the U.S. may become the sole beneficiary of a partnership relationship. “FMF [foreign military financing] advances U.S. interests in many ways...countries buy U.S. equipment...the basis of the relationship is formed. The countries typically secure long-term commitments for training in how to maintain and operate the equipment...relationships are sustained through military sales...spare and replacement parts ensure that competitor countries do not interfere.”¹⁶⁰ Despite the U.S. building up East African countries’ coast guards to defeat piracy (U.S. interest), these PNs consider illegal and unreported fishing as a greater concern.¹⁶¹ By ignoring the most basic constraint of SFA – the PN’s realistic requirements and needs – the U.S. effort is inhibited from the onset of execution and sets the tone for an undesired outcome.

¹⁵⁸ Saab, “What Does America Get for its Military Aid?”

¹⁵⁹ Lionel Beehner, “Fragile States and the Territory Conundrum to Countering Violent Nonstate Actors,” *Democracy and Security* (December 28, 2017), 15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2017.1408009>.

¹⁶⁰ Derek Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 113.

¹⁶¹ Reveron, 150.

D. IMPLICATIONS OF ASSUMPTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

The effects of weak SFA policy and planning not only inhibit the ability of the PN to sustain a monopoly of violence, they also reduce the overall readiness of the U.S. Army. As shown in previous sections, the long-term success of SFA missions are undercut by focusing too much on technical “capabilities” and largely ignore the underlying causes, nuances, and atmospherics that cue the SFA mission in the first place. This section will highlight how unsuitable approaches to SFA can fan the flames of violence and actually serve as a de-stabilizer to the PN.

Africa has historically been a strategic afterthought of the U.S.; prior to the Global War on Terror (GWOT), U.S. intervention on the continent was limited primarily to humanitarian emergencies. AFRICOM and USARAF were established in 2009 with the task to support security cooperation operations and SFA throughout the continent.¹⁶² As the GWOT has persisted, U.S. military involvement has increased to include a permanent U.S. base in Djibouti, multiple security cooperative locations, and will soon include a substantial U.S. base in Niger tasked to support increasing drone operations.¹⁶³

SFA policy towards Mali has been misplaced as it ignores the guerillas’ success and growth that largely emerged from Mali’s political order that remains favorable only to national elites.¹⁶⁴ As the political problem is ignored, a narrow focus on technical support to the Malian army persists and is assumed to be the best fix.¹⁶⁵ When the Malian army collapsed in 2012, critical atmospherics (constraints) such as state legitimacy, national identity, and resource distribution were ignored – as were vast human rights abuses conducted by the army.¹⁶⁶ Chad offers a similar example as it has hosted numerous joint-

¹⁶² Michael S. Hartmayer, “Security Force Assistance in Africa: The Case for Regionally Aligned BCTs,” *Army* 61, no. 11 (2011), 46.

¹⁶³ Powell, “The Destabilizing Dangers of U.S. Counterterrorism in the Sahel.”

¹⁶⁴ Powell, “The Destabilizing Dangers of U.S. Counterterrorism in the Sahel.”

¹⁶⁵ Simon Powelson, “Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF From Mali” (master’s thesis., Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 60, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/38996>.

¹⁶⁶ “Mali: Unchecked Abuses in Military Operations Mali: Burkina Faso Troops Commit Killings, “Disappearances,” Torture,” Human Rights Watch, September 8, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/08/mali-unchecked-abuses-military-operations>.

military exercises (organized by the U.S.), shares intelligence, and is a U.S. partner in battling Boko Haram—yet their political leadership has also directed human rights abuses and leverages U.S. assistance to consolidate rule.¹⁶⁷ Simply put, more capable militaries trained by SFA with the assumed best method of technical assistance may only become better oppressors if the political problem is unheeded by policymakers.

The U.S. Army's mission is to fight and win the nation's land wars. The go-to element utilized for this task is the BCT. In recent years, virtually all deployments that BCTs have taken part in have been focused, not in fundamental Army tasks, but those of asymmetric operations and SFA. Requirements on the BCTs continue to mount while the number of BCTs continue to shrink. BCTs have been continuously utilized to serve in SFA roles; this mission set is a far cry from the training cycle that is utilized at the home station. During home station and pre-mission training, tanks maneuver to close with and destroy plywood tank targets, infantry elements seize key terrain, artillery elements deliver accurate indirect fire, sustainers feverishly deliver classes of supply to all BCT elements, and the Brigade headquarters integrates the functions and joint assets. When deployed, the BCT replaces a BCT that arrived nine-months prior and now faces the task of building relations with the PN to counter VEOs or provide theater security cooperation efforts. These deployment tasks do not marry up with the training tasks – leading to a situation of perishing fundamental skills and readiness while BCTs arriving to areas of operation inadequately prepared to fulfill the mission requirements. The following chapter will delve into BCT readiness issues that resulted from an over-reliance on BCT's to perform SFA missions.

E. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SFA POLICY

With the assumptions and constraints inherent to SFA outlined and their implications discussed from the lens of academia and think tanks, current policies and procedures can be analyzed. This section will examine the course corrections taken by policymakers in an effort to reduce ad hoc approaches, increase accountability, and

¹⁶⁷ Powell, "The Destabilizing Dangers of U.S. Counterterrorism in the Sahel."

enhance interagency collaboration; ultimately, the research suggests that loop holes are still in place.

The DoD's role in building foreign militaries has grown significantly since 9/11. The DoD had a direct role in planning and budgeting these projects and even created the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DCSA) to implement these plans.¹⁶⁸ With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan shifting to stability and security cooperation, many of the traditional sets of U.S. foreign assistance programs began to fall under the purview of the DoD, calling into question the over-militarization of U.S. foreign policy.¹⁶⁹ To rectify the imbalance, President Obama issued Presidential Policy Directive-23 (PPD-23) in April 2013 in order to formally direct the agencies (DoS, DoD, DoT, USAID, etc.) to work together to accomplish security sector assistance (SSA).¹⁷⁰ Recognizing that floundering SSA initiatives may very well have been the product of disjointed U.S. efforts, President Obama mandated collaboration.

Transparency and coordination across the United States Government are needed to integrate security sector assistance into broader strategies, synchronize agencies efforts, reduce redundancies, minimize assistance-delivery timelines...measure effectiveness...all agencies will take practical steps to embrace the principle of joint formulation and share responsibilities.¹⁷¹

The PPD formally identified the DoS as the leading agency for all SSA activities.¹⁷² Furthermore, it required the formulation of a country team to plan efforts at the country level with participation of relevant agencies and subject matter experts to craft an integrated country strategy (ICS) to be approved by the chief of mission.¹⁷³ The ICS is to be the core

¹⁶⁸ Gordon Adams and Rebecca Williams. *A New Way Forward: Rebalancing Security Assistance Programs and Authorities* (Washington, DC: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2011), 6 <https://www.stimson.org/content/new-way-forward-rebalancing-security-assistance-programs-and-authorities>.

¹⁶⁹ Adams and Williams, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Barack Obama, *Security Sector Assistance*, Presidential Policy Directive 23, (April 2013): 1–2, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy>.

¹⁷¹ Obama, 4.

¹⁷² Obama, 6.

¹⁷³ Obama, 6.

organizing document for SSA activities in a specific country and will be subjugated to monitoring assessments and an inter-agency (DoD / DoS) SSA oversight board.¹⁷⁴ It is clear in PPD-23 the President was mandating that U.S. foreign policy de-militarize itself by directing the DoS to take the lead and integrate the tools of U.S. national power.

Unfortunately, it took nearly four years of stagnant SFA in Afghanistan, terrorism spill over and proliferation in Africa, and the complete failure of the Iraqi Security Forces at the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to motivate any real change in planning. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2017 contained language that was critical of the ad hoc nature of security cooperation, an over-emphasis on tactical and operational training at the expense of institution building, deficiencies in DoD and DoS interaction, and the persistent lack of performance measures to assess progress.¹⁷⁵

In light of this direction, the DoD issued DoD-Instruction (DoD-I) 5132.14, *Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise*.¹⁷⁶ The primary purpose of this DoD-I is to foster accountability, assess sustainability of programs, and improve returns on DoD security cooperation investments.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, it mandated the conduct of initial assessments designed to establish a baseline, address assumptions and constraints, and ultimately guide the process. To this point, the MILDEPs and agencies involved in security cooperation lacked a unified platform to share data relevant to assessing, monitoring, and the evaluation (AM&E) of PN capability and capacity. This directive rectified that problem with the implementation of the Global Theatre Security Cooperation Information Management System (G-TSCMIS).¹⁷⁸ Entry of security cooperation AM&E data into G-TSCMIS is required during all phases of planning and execution; this initiative is designed to reduce redundancy, share

¹⁷⁴ Obama, *Security Sector Assistance*, 7–8.

¹⁷⁵ H.R. 840, 114th Cong., 2nd sess. (2016), <https://www.congress.gov/114/crpt/hrpt840/CRPT-114hrpt840.pdf>, 1196–1199.

¹⁷⁶ Department of Defense, *Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise*, DoD Instruction 5132.14 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2017), https://open.defense.gov/portals/23/documents/foreignasst/dodi_513214_on_am&e.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ Department of Defense, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Department of Defense, 5–6.

lessons learned, and track the progress of partner nations with relevant performance metrics.

The 2017 NDAA also sets forth a broader range of authorities for the DoD in section 333, Foreign Security Forces: authority to build capacity.¹⁷⁹ This section allows the DoD to conduct programs that build capacity of partner nations in the realms of counter-terrorism, counter-weapons of mass destruction, counter-illicit drug trafficking, and maritime and border security. This section is the primary source for what the DoD refers to as SFA; therefore, building partner capacity and SFA are used synonymously.

Up unto this point, one would believe that the DoS is truly the lead for SFA activities as it falls under SC and SSA; however, there is always a loop hole. The pseudo letter of offer and acceptance (LOA) is that loop hole. In a traditional LOA, requests from partner nations are typically the catalyst for the SSA (SA or SC) process to begin; by initiating a letter of request (LOR), the partner nation will justify the purpose of the defense article or training, how they intend to utilize it, and how they intend to sustain the capability long term.¹⁸⁰ Once the LOR is received by a U.S. security cooperation officer, it is highly scrutinized with checklists, legal reviews, foreign disclosure, and will likely be adjusted and returned to the partner nation in the form of an LOA. This process is followed for foreign military sales, institutional training, and other services; however, SFA and BPC programs largely utilize the pseudo LOA.

With a pseudo LOA, the DoD (typically a COCOM) will initiate the request to deliver defense articles, services, or training that support Section 333 of Title 10 U.S. Code as listed above.¹⁸¹ The pseudo LOA is not signed by the recipient partner nation, the U.S. is responsible for shipment of the defense articles, and the rigorous terms of the traditional

¹⁷⁹ H.R. 840, 505.

¹⁸⁰ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, DSCA 5105.38-M (Washington, DC: Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2018), <http://www.samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-5>, C5.1.2.1.

¹⁸¹ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Security Assistance Management Manual* <http://www.samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-15>, C15.1.1.

LOA do not apply to pseudo LOAs.¹⁸² Pseudo LOAs came about because the DoD essentially took the lead on security assistance after 9/11; despite PPD-23 and NDAA 17 attempting to de-militarize foreign policy, the pseudo LOA remains. Despite the requirement to notify Congress of pseudo-LOAs, the process to deliver SFA is streamlined in ways that ultimately keep the DoD as the lead agency for security sector assistance.

F. CONCLUSION

This chapter has set out to identify correlation between incoherent SFA planning that does not properly recognize assumptions and minimizes the constraints inherent to SFA missions. A holistic approach was utilized to describe the nature and context of the SFA mission, its purposes, and desired outcomes. While the failures and shortcomings of many PN forces is largely blamed on the PN itself or the U.S. Generals in charge of overseeing these SFA operations, this chapter argues a share of the fault rests on SFA policy and planning. A critical analysis of security assistance policy was completed and indicates that despite Executive and Congressional efforts to de-militarize U.S. foreign policy, loops holes remain. As SFA policy remains incoherent, SFA planners overlook the assumptions that militarized and technical approaches are best – automatically presuming measures of effectiveness to be the raw-data of how many “capabilities” are transferred and how many soldiers get trained. The assumption that the only stakeholders involved are the U.S. and the PN fails to account for external actors and the culture of the broader PN, which may undermine success. Constraints intrinsic to SFA are easy to overlook as the P-A problem manifests itself in many ways, to include: misaligned and fluctuating interest of both parties, ignored PN support requests, and inappropriate focuses that misunderstand the institutional capacity of a PN.

Implications of poor SFA policy and plans can have unintended destabilizing effects in fragile regions and serve to reduce the overall readiness of the primary MILDEP utilized for the mission – the U.S. Army. While the U.S. continues to throw money at the problem, policymakers fail to scrutinize the root and underlying causes for faltering SFA

¹⁸² Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Security Assistance Management Manual* <http://www.samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-15>, C15.1.1.

efforts. The U.S. military will continue to execute SFA missions handed down from policymakers. The U.S. military can and will continue to effectively train foreign militaries, especially with the top-cover of the pseudo LOA. Policymakers and SFA planners need to properly address these planning assumptions and constraints in order to assess progress and ensure intent/interest alignment with foreign governments if the desired outcome is to ensure these efforts have long term benefits. Until that occurs, SFA will continue to miss the mark and not achieve the larger intended purpose.

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IV. THE U.S. ARMY'S ROLE IN SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate how the U.S. Army adapted its doctrine and organization to meet rising SFA requirements and to determine why the U.S. Army is establishing six Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFAB). It will assert the SFABs are being established to meet enduring SFA requirements and allow the Army's general-purpose forces (GPF) to focus on increasing readiness, training, and preparing for future high-intensity conflicts. As the research will describe, tactical adaptations to problem-sets in Iraq and Afghanistan heavily influenced innovations in doctrine and SFA organizations while increasing operational requirements necessitated the Army to overcome resistance to SFA.

While the DoS exports diplomacy and leadership to nations with weak governance, the DoD plays a critical role in exporting security by building *capability* and *capacity* in nations that are combating terrorism and violent non-state actors. Critical to this effort is to “address the root causes of conflict before they erupt.”¹⁸³ Joint Publication (JP) 3-20, *Security Cooperation*, defines *capability* as the partner's ability to accomplish an assigned task; whereas, *capacity* is defined as the partner's “ability to self-sustain and self-replicate a given capability.”¹⁸⁴ As SFA requirements continued to rise, the U.S. Army's primary deployable force, the BCTs, were increasingly called upon to fill requirements which led to low levels of readiness across the Army. While the U.S. Army continued to find itself operating at a high tempo with SFA missions, a new emphasis was placed on ensuring BCTs across the U.S. Army could defeat a near peer threat in high-intensity conflict.

SFA has undergone many transformations that ultimately led to the SFAB; a chronological approach will be used to observe the trends that led to the current model of

¹⁸³ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), <http://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/2015.pdf>, 10.

¹⁸⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, JP 3-20 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf, I-2.

the SFAB and the doctrine it utilizes. The evolution of SFA will be discussed by reviewing lessons learned, complications, and successes from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Competing operational requirements of the BCTs and the U.S. Army SOF will be reviewed as they pertain to SFA.

B. INNOVATION AND ADAPTION – THE U.S. ARMY’S SFA GROWING PAINS

This section will introduce the theories of military innovation and adaption that ultimately lead to a revolution in military affairs (RMA). Bureaucratic politics, organizational behavior, organizational culture, and organizational learning also serve as variables, and paradoxically, as inhibitors that lead to RMA. These theories and ideas will be introduced to establish a platform for the subsequent discussions on U.S. Army doctrine and organizations leading up to the conceptualization and implementation of the SFAB. The institutionalization of the SFA mission in the U.S. Army’s form of the SFAB can be seen as an RMA that is the manifestation of subsequent innovations and war-time adaptations.

The highest level of military change is the RMA; it refers to “radical military innovation, in which organizational structures together with novel force deployment methods...change the conduct of warfare.”¹⁸⁵ This kind of change is tectonic, as it blends organizational change, doctrinal change, the way of war, and the manner in which planners’ vision future conflicts.¹⁸⁶ The wide consensus in academia is that military innovation is a top-down driven process in which organizational leaders are the primary variable in major changes.¹⁸⁷ Stephen Peter Rosen defines a major innovation as “a change that forces one of the primary combat arms of a service to change its concepts of operation and its relation

¹⁸⁵ Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the U.S. and Israel* (Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 1.

¹⁸⁶ Adamsky, 1.

¹⁸⁷ James Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 23.

to other combat arms.”¹⁸⁸ He goes on to argue that military innovation is essentially a problem of bureaucracy and that because bureaucracies are designed to not change, militaries can be resistant to transformation.¹⁸⁹ Barry Posen also claims a top-down view of innovation. Those at the top of an organizational hierarchy have achieved rank and position by mastering old doctrine and, therefore, will only seek innovation if civilian authorities force the change or if the old doctrine leads to a decisive military defeat.¹⁹⁰

While innovation is regarded as a higher-level concept involving organizational and doctrinal change, adaption is more tactical in nature and not as widely studied. James Russell worked to fill this gap by examining how tactical adaptations can potentially lead to military innovations. He found that feedback loops act as channels to codify effective adaptations and can lead to a change in organizational procedures; over time this process can lead to departures in organizational operations.¹⁹¹ In fact, tactical adaptations in wartime are vital to the process of the kind of organizational learning that can lead to an internally driven military innovation or RMA.¹⁹² Despite different causal theories, the common denominators of military innovation include a change in operations, doctrine, and the “eventual development of different missions for military units not previously envisioned.”¹⁹³ Arguably, the formation of the SFAB is one such military innovation as it brings a new Army unit complete with an innovative organization, mission, doctrine, and new incentives.

The U.S. Army’s decision to commit energy, capital, and manpower to a mission that is not consistent with its organizational essence and culture has not happened overnight. Like any organization, the U.S. Army has a doctrinal mission to accomplish and

¹⁸⁸ Stephen Peter Rosen, “New Ways of War: Understanding Military Innovation.” *International Security* 13, no. 1 (1988): 134–168, https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international_security/v013/13.1.rosen.html.

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 2.

¹⁹⁰ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 59.

¹⁹¹ Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, 52.

¹⁹² Russell, 52.

¹⁹³ Russell, 29.

will seek to sustain its core competencies, which are deeply rooted in its cultural identity. “Organizational essence is the view held by a dominant group within the organization of what its mission and capabilities should be.”¹⁹⁴ An organization’s essence will shape how it prioritizes interests; furthermore, it will pursue capabilities, policies, and strategies that support its essence and resist those that threaten that essence.¹⁹⁵ The leaders within the U.S. Army view their essence to be ground combat capability and have historically been less interested in missions that fall outside that realm, such as the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) during the Korean War and Vietnam War.¹⁹⁶ Today, the U.S. Army’s mission is to “fight and win our Nation’s wars by providing prompt, sustained land dominance across the full range of military operations and spectrum of conflict in support of combatant commanders.”¹⁹⁷ This broad mission statement not only deliberately delivers land dominance as a key task but also acknowledges military operations, such as SFA, that occur on all sides of the conflict continuum. Subsequent sections of this chapter will provide an evidence chain to examine how the effects of tactical adaptations, civilian (policymaker) interventions, operational requirements, and pioneering military leaders lead the ad hoc efforts to improve SFA in ways that culminated in the SFAB.

C. INNOVATION AND ADAPTION OF SFA DOCTRINE

The tempo of operations between 2004 and 2006 quickly outpaced doctrine development. U.S. servicemembers were deploying to highly complex operating environments with growing terrorist networks and insurgencies with no doctrine to effectively prepare for the mission. Despite the lack of a unifying joint doctrine, Soldiers and Marines effectively adapted their techniques and procedures to counter the enemy.¹⁹⁸ With feedback loops established, tactical adaptations manifested into organizational innovations as standard operating procedures were developed and a greater institutional

¹⁹⁴ Morton Halperin and Priscilla Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2006), 27.

¹⁹⁵ Halperin and Clapp, 38–39.

¹⁹⁶ Halperin and Clapp, 33.

¹⁹⁷ “Who We Are,” U.S. Army, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.army.mil/info/organization/>.

¹⁹⁸ Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, 191.

knowledgebase was formed.¹⁹⁹ As U.S. servicemembers performed as best they could with no doctrinal framework for operations, policymakers continued to fumble the doctrine problem.

The *Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities* report emphasised that the DoD and the DoS needed to make stabilization and reconstruction missions one of their core competencies.²⁰⁰ Bureaucratic politics led policymakers to disregard this recommendation for increased interagency collaboration; however, the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and DoD Instruction Number 3000.05 empowered General David Petraeus to craft counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine for stability operations.²⁰¹ By 2006, FM 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*, was delivered as it asserted, “This manual is designed to fill a doctrinal gap... our Soldiers and Marines [are] fighting insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is essential that we give them a manual... Soldiers and Marines are expected to be nation builders as well as warriors... They must be prepared to help reestablish institutions and local security forces.”²⁰² This militarized approach to SFA would persist until 2009.

Shifts in irregular warfare approaches under the Obama Administration began as early as January 2009 with the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* that aimed to bridge the interagency divide.²⁰³ This report stated, “the Department [of Defense] will continue to promote and participate in efforts to institutionalize irregular warfare in interagency planning... primary irregular warfare activities addressed by this report – foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, unconventional warfare,

¹⁹⁹ Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War*, 192.

²⁰⁰ Craig I. Fields and Philip A. Odeen, *Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2004), vi and xvii.

²⁰¹ Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 120–125.

²⁰² Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3–24 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), <https://usacac.army.mil/cac2/Repository/Materials/COIN-FM3-24.pdf>, Foreword.

²⁰³ Robert Gates, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2009), https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/QDR/QRMFfinalReport_v26Jan.pdf.

and stability operations.”²⁰⁴ Subsequently, an updated DoD Instruction 3000.05 mandated the DoD performs stability operations through all phases of conflict and take a “whole of government” approach that achieves interagency collaboration.²⁰⁵ Despite the DoD-Instruction, senior military leaders insisted that “stability operations were just a subset of conventional ones and that skill in the later had deteriorated...emphasis would shift to almost strictly conventional training.”²⁰⁶

Regardless of bureaucratic politics and organizational tensions, by 2009, the U.S. Army quickly turned one of the first doctrinal manuals focused solely on SFA, FM 3–07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, arguably due to the fact that the Army was heavily invested in Iraq and Afghanistan with the SFA aperture expanding to Africa. “Based on lesson learned from previous advising efforts...two primary audiences for this manual are leaders in BCTs conducting SFA and Soldiers assigned as advisors.”²⁰⁷ The U.S. Army defined SFA as “the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority.”²⁰⁸ Army units deploying in support of SFA were now armed with doctrine that provided strategic context, SFA activities, metrics for assessments, training objectives, and organizations.

While the U.S. Army worked feverishly to codify SFA doctrine, hesitancy at the joint level persisted until 2016. JP 3–22, *Foreign Internal Defense*, (FID) was established in 2010 to clarify how joint operations would involve all instruments of power to support partner nation efforts to build capacity.²⁰⁹ JP 3–22 missed the mark, as FID is an effort to support already established internal defense, while SFA is an effort to develop the security

²⁰⁴ Gates, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report*, 10.

²⁰⁵ Department of Defense, *Stability Operations*, DoD Instruction 3000.05 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense September 16, 2009), <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/300005p.pdf>, 2–8.

²⁰⁶ Conrad Crane *Cassandra in Oz: Counterinsurgency and Future War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 220.

²⁰⁷ Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance*, FM 3–07.1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2009), <https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472033904-FM3071.pdf>, Preface.

²⁰⁸ Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance*, 1.

²⁰⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Foreign Internal Defense*, JP 3–22 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010), www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_22.pdf.

forces so it can make strides in governance. Joint Doctrine Note 1–13 was published in 2013, yet again, it formally directed the DoD to collaborate with other U.S. agencies to “strengthen the capability and capacity of a partner nations security forces.”²¹⁰ JP 3–07, *Stability*, was published in 2016, and it emphasized a comprehensive approach; “unlike a whole-of-government approach that aims for true interagency integration toward unity of effort, a comprehensive approach requires a more nuanced, cooperative effort.”²¹¹ With the codification of JP 3–07, the military departments now had a unifying framework within which to ground operations. With the SFA mission enduring as the U.S. Army announced the SFAB concept, JP 3-20, *Security Cooperation*, was released in 2017 that further clarified roles, responsibilities, planning efforts, and assessment metrics for future SFA missions.²¹²

Coupled with JP 3-20, the SFABs will utilize the most current U.S. Army doctrine for future missions. FM 3–07, *Stability*, replaced FM 3–07.1 as the most comprehensive manual on stability operations because it incorporates SFA as a necessary component to a broader stability mission. Additionally, FM 3–07 indicates that the U.S. Army can indeed support FID; “Army support to foreign internal defense often takes the form of security force assistance.”²¹³ FM 3–07 refers heavily to FM 3–22, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*, for greater clarity on current SFA activities. FM 3–22 seeks to reduce confusion; “[SFA] is a subset of DoD overall security cooperation initiatives and that [SFA] activities directly increase the capacity or capability of FSF or their supporting institutions.”²¹⁴ All aspects of SFA are outlined for planners to consider in order to deliver

²¹⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Force Assistance*, JDN 1–13 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2013), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn/jdn1_13.pdf, II-1.

²¹¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Stability*, JD 3–07 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2016), http://pksoi.armywarcollege.edu/default/assets/File/jp3_07.pdf, I-20.

²¹² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, JP 3-20 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf.

²¹³ Department of the Army, *Stability*, FM 3–07 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2014), <https://usacac.army.mil/cac2/repository/FM307/FM3-07.pdf>, 1–26.

²¹⁴ Department of the Army, *Army Support to Security Cooperation*, FM 3–22 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/3-22/fm3-22.pdf>, 1–10.

a comprehensive guideline: mitigating risks, legal considerations (both domestic and partner-nation), assessment considerations, SFA elements, deployment activities, and advisor skills. SFAB planners will be enabled with comprehensive doctrine to support their mission; even if sifting through these nuanced manuals may be challenging, it certainly is better than the situation in 2004 to 2006. In June 2018, three months after the first SFAB deployed to Afghanistan for its initial mission, Army Training Publication (ATP) 3–96.1, *Security Force Assistance Brigade*, was published to serve as formal doctrine specific to the SFABs.²¹⁵

D. INNOVATION AND ADAPTION OF SFA ORGANIZATIONS

Exporting security has taken many forms since the regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan were toppled with the aim to replace them with democratic regimes. Some of these forms will further be discussed and include: military transition teams (MiTT), advise and assistance brigades (AAB), security force advisory transition teams (SFATT), and regionally aligned forces (RAF). These approaches varied greatly in the size of military commitment and methods to achieve success; however, they had the same purpose to support security cooperation and build partnerships. Contemporarily, the SFA concept was utilized in Iraq by establishing the MiTT in 2004.²¹⁶ A MiTT was comprised of an 11-man team with a wide array of specialties: infantry, intelligence, logistics, communications, and engineer experience that were assigned to an Iraqi battalion, brigade, or division. The ad hoc nature of these teams coming together coupled with no formal training or doctrine led to the MiTTs finding themselves overwhelmed, unsupported by local BCTs, and unprepared for the task.²¹⁷ Initial shortcomings of the MiTT concept cued the advisor

²¹⁵ Department of the Army, *Security Force Assistance Brigade*, ATP 3–96.1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2018), https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN8448_ATP%203-96x1%20FINAL%20Web.pdf.

²¹⁶ Liam P Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World: Maximizing Security Force Assistance Potential in the Regionally Aligned Brigade Combat Team* (Carlisle, PA: Army War College, 2015), 11.

²¹⁷ Walsh, 12.

surge of 2007–2008 that saw a boost in MiTT numbers and the addition of a 60-day training program at Fort Riley, Kansas.²¹⁸

U.S. Army officers began to advocate for the formation of a permanent U.S. Army unit that would serve only to conduct SFA in 2008.²¹⁹ Trends and weaknesses in the original MiTT concept were identified through feedback loops such as: a lack of formal training, size constraints, loss of SFA continuity, and conflicting missions between MiTTs and the land-owning units to which they were assigned.²²⁰ Stephen Biddle clarified this point, “a standard MiTT embedded with an Iraqi battalion had only 11 Americans... some ISF soldiers would only see their U.S. partners once or twice a week... infrequent contact made it hard to monitor the performance of Iraqi units well enough to ensure consistent professional behavior.”²²¹ Institutionally, the U.S. Army has been at risk for hemorrhaging its knowledge base over time with the lack of a permanent SFA unit to foster lessons learned and cultivate an SFA culture. The formation of a permanent SFA unit would eliminate this risk of perishing SFA skills and would increase SFA coverage to partner-security forces abroad.²²²

SFA organizations would evolve over time as the mission changed; by 2009, the primary U.S. focus in Iraq and Afghanistan was transition of power back to the partner nation. The key shift was that land-owning, combat BCTs would now be augmented for SFA and would reflag to AABs. Upon receipt of an SFA mission, the BCT would receive up to 48 trained MiTT advisors, reflag to an AAB, and thus, transform into an advisory brigade.²²³ As 2010 wound down, the mission in Iraq formally shifted from combat to

²¹⁸ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 14.

²¹⁹ Charles Jack, “Creation of the Advisory Unit in the U.S. Army,” (Naval War College, 2008), <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA484298>.

²²⁰ Jack, 8–9

²²¹ Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 0, no. 0 (April 12, 2017): 1–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>, 27.

²²² Jack, “Creation of the Advisory Unit in the U.S. Army,” 10.

²²³ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 18.

advise and assist.²²⁴ With the 2011 withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, focus shifted to the war in Afghanistan; the AAB structure manifested itself in a very similar construct – the SFATT. Unlike the AAB, which ensured unity of effort by augmenting brigades with trained MiTT advisors, the SFATTs were comprised by plucking senior leaders from brigades and inserting them as advisors in Afghan battalions, brigades, and divisions.²²⁵

Despite traditional combat operations and advisory missions decreasing in Iraq and Afghanistan, the requirement for global security remained a priority as multiple fragile states in Africa became breeding grounds for terrorist organization and non-state actors alike. By 2012, the U.S. Army had great institutional knowledge from years of SFA experience and announced a new concept—regionally aligned forces (RAF). The main operational construct was to align one BCT to each combatant command (COCOM) and provide a trained and ready BCT to COCOM Commanders. The RAF concept affords a flexible BCT to meet requirements in shaping operations that could prevent conflict and stabilize a region; furthermore, this concept maintains years of SFA knowledge and produces culturally aware Soldiers.²²⁶ The RAF concept was utilized to deploy BCTs to Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and ultimately, a return to Iraq. Soldiers who deployed to Djibouti routinely trained partner forces in Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, and Kenya.²²⁷ Deployments to Kuwait often rendered the opportunity to train with soldiers from Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Jordan.²²⁸ The U.S. Army, specifically, its BCTs, has maintained a very high operations tempo in the realm of SFA that persists today. Concerns about the U.S. Army sacrificing and misunderstanding its *war-fighting* mission in the name of SFA were voiced as early as 2015.²²⁹

²²⁴ Greg Jaffe, “War in Iraq Will be Called ‘Operation New Dawn’ to Reflect Reduced U.S. Role.” *Washington Post* (February 2010), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/18/AR2010021805888.html>.

²²⁵ Walsh, *Enabling Others to Win in a Complex World*, 20.

²²⁶ Gregory Cantwell, Tam Warren, and Mark Orwat, “Regionally Aligned Forces: Concept Viability and Implementation” (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2015), <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/carlislecompendia/Issues/mar2015/full.pdf>, 1–2.

²²⁷ From the author’s personal experience while on deployment to Djibouti in 2015.

²²⁸ From the author’s personal experience while on deployment to Kuwait in 2016.

²²⁹ Gregory Cantwell, et al., “Regionally Aligned Forces,” 1–2.

Regardless of the U.S. Army's efforts to formalize SFA in the organization with updated doctrine, mission statements, and a tailored force structure, it struggled to incentivize SFA. As aforementioned, the Army's organizational essence has always been rooted in moving massive amounts of combat power to secure land dominance over a peer or near-peer adversary. A Soldier's performance and potential in traditional combat roles is rewarded, whereas, an assignment in support of SFA is seen as peripheral and even career damaging. One primary concern, particularly in the officer corps, is that assignment to an SFA mission takes them off the career path for promotion.²³⁰ SFA assignments could last a year or more, which could cause an officer to fall behind their peers because critical time away from a "branch qualifying" position would, in some cases, exclude them from promoting to the next grade or higher-level position.²³¹ Incentivizing officers to break from their traditional roles to serve in SFA assignments required adaption of the personnel management and promotion systems within the Army. The Army's success with incentivizing SFAB assignments include: unit heraldry (distinctive unit patch and brown beret), assignment bonuses, and advanced promotions for volunteers who complete the rigorous selection and training requirements.²³² The promotion rates for officers and non-commissioned officers assigned to the first SFAB is very close to 100 percent.

With updated doctrine, U.S. Army posture statements, years of SFA trial and error, and the enduring requirement to do SFA, the Army announced the creation of the SFAB concept in February 2017.²³³ The Army is planning to form six SFABs, the first of which began training at the newly established Military Advisor Training Academy located on Fort Benning in October 2017. The SFAB is composed of 500–600 Soldiers, all of whom

²³⁰ Andrew Feickert, *Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force of Specialized Units? Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. RL34333 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34333.pdf>, 9.

²³¹ Feickert, 9.

²³² Meghann Myers, "Army Offers Automatic Promotions to Security Force Assistance Brigade Volunteers," *Army Times*, last modified October 11, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/10/11/army-offers-automatic-promotions-to-security-force-assistance-brigade-volunteers/>.

²³³ Connie Lee, "Senior Strategist Highlights Security Force Assistance Brigade Benefits," *InsideDefense*, April 20, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1889700489/abstract/D29D743CEA5B4ADAPQ/1>.

volunteer, score well on physical fitness and language tests, and are thoroughly vetted. Additionally, SFAB positions have been added to the list of key-developmental and branch qualifying positions in order to incentivize any assignment to the organization. The full-time nature of the SFAB will eliminate the ad hoc nature in which the Army has approached SFA and provide, for the first time, multiple SFA units that are solely focused on that task. The first two SFABs will focus on the Middle East, with subsequent SFABs activating and focusing on the Pacific, Africa, and Europe. As a permanent addition to the U.S. Army, the SFAB will better meet strategic objectives of the NSS.²³⁴

E. BALANCING OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS TO INCREASE READINESS AND MEET MISSION

In 2003, the U.S. Army began to restructure itself from a Cold-War oriented division-based force into a modular and flexible BCT-based force, primarily to create a larger pool of units available to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan.²³⁵ The transformation from a Cold War Army structure to a War on Terror structure drove the modification of doctrine, ad hoc SFA organizations, and BCT unit training. Significant changes at the combat training centers (CTCs), which serve as the capstone training events for BCTs prior to deployment – shifted from force-on-force scenarios to complex COIN scenarios in support of stability operations.²³⁶ Deployment turnarounds were rotating units faster than the CTCs could train them, leading to a situation in which some BCTs deployed without a CTC exercise. At best, BCTs would arrive at a CTC at low levels of combat readiness and depart the month-long exercise at even lower levels, just prior to their deployment. While the Army has since made strides to increase readiness and massive combat deployments of BCTs have largely diminished since 2011, there are still readiness concerns throughout the Army.

²³⁴ Lee, “Senior Strategist Highlights Security Force Assistance Brigade Benefits.”

²³⁵ Feickert, *Does the Army Need a Full-Spectrum Force of Specialized Units? Background and Issues for Congress*, 9.

²³⁶ Feickert, 6–7.

Readiness refers to the ability of a unit to execute its range of assigned tasks.²³⁷ The extent to which a unit's personnel are equipped and trained, coupled with maintenance of equipment, spare parts, and stocks of consumables will contribute to the readiness level.²³⁸ The readiness levels of Army BCTs at the tactical level will have cascading effects all the way up to the strategic level. As noted in Chapter II, the U.S. defense strategy requires active engagement and forward presence in multiple regions simultaneously to deter or defeat aggression. An element of this strategy is known as the "two-war" requirement, which necessitates the ability to defeat two regional adversaries at once.²³⁹ The BCTs are the standard deployable Army units that provide credible forward presence to deter aggression and assure allies in the Persian Gulf, Europe, and Pacific; defeat terror groups abroad through direct-military action and in-direct action such as SFA. Unfortunately, readiness of the U.S. military is still poor today. The National Defense Panel in 2014 found the DoD faces "major readiness shortfalls that will, absent a decisive reversal of course, create the possibility of a hollow force that loses its best people."²⁴⁰ The reason for the readiness crisis is twofold: first, years of revolving-door conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan have placed a heavy burden on people and equipment; and second, the training requirements of these missions have been primarily SFA and counter-insurgency focused at the expense and hemorrhaging of traditional combat focused training.²⁴¹ In 2017, the readiness challenges ensued as BCTs continued to fill SFA requirements; only 30 percent of all BCTs in the Army were considered ready to conduct large scale combined arms operations.²⁴²

²³⁷ David Ochmanek, Andrew R. Hoehn, James T. Quinlivan, Seth G. Jones and Edward L. Warner, *America's Security Deficit: Addressing the Imbalance Between Strategy and Resources in a Turbulent World: Strategic Rethink* (Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2015) 18–19.

²³⁸ Ochmanek, 19.

²³⁹ Ochmanek, *America's Security Deficit*, 19.

²⁴⁰ William J. Perry and John P. Abizaid, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future: The National Defense Panel Review of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, July 2014), 36.

²⁴¹ Ochmanek, *America's Security Deficit*, 20.

²⁴² Meghann Myers, "Milley: Without Proper Funding, the Service Risks Becoming a 'Hollow Army,'" *Army Times*, May 25, 2017, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/05/25/milley-without-proper-funding-the-service-risks-becoming-a-hollow-army/>.

In the most recent Army Posture Statement in 2016, Army leadership asserted its number one priority for the force would be to improve readiness.²⁴³ The Army Posture Statement goes on to assert that today's Army leaders have grown up in an era of COIN operations and, therefore, lack experience in combined arms operations against a conventional enemy force.²⁴⁴ Four components of readiness are addressed: manning, training, equipping, and leader development. The problem identified is how to sustain Army operations abroad, which account for 40 percent of committed forces and 60 percent of emerging commitments, while also cultivating long term readiness in the four key areas.²⁴⁵ The Army finds itself in the predicament of righting the course on readiness and traditional combined arms focus while at the same time executing SFA missions as handed down from policymakers.

Historically, SOF has been utilized to conduct SFA in places like El Salvador, Columbia, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. SOF's focus has recently shifted away from SFA due to the increase in conventional forces conducting SFA and the requirement for SOF units to conduct unconventional warfare (UW).²⁴⁶ SOF is tasked to not only conduct SFA but also to conduct UW, leading to an overstretched and overtaxed SOF arm of the Army. The U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley (former SOF), has articulated his vision for SFA, "Special Forces has gone out and done what they're supposed to do, and only they can do, which is train irregular forces...Special Forces does not train the Afghan National Army. They don't train them now. They never have. Same thing in Iraq...there's a reason for that."²⁴⁷ General Milley's assertion eludes to the nature of conventional SFA versus irregular SFA. SOF personnel are not the experts in conventional

²⁴³ *A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army of 2016*, 114th Cong (2016) (statement of Patrick Murphy and General Mark Milley) https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/aps/aps_2016.pdf, 1.

²⁴⁴ Murphy and Milley, testimony on *The Posture of the United States Army of 2016*, 6.

²⁴⁵ Murphy and Milley, testimony on *The Posture of the United States Army of 2016*, 6.

²⁴⁶ Tim Ball, "Replaced? Security Force Assistance Brigades vs. Special Forces," *War on the Rocks* (Blog), February 23, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/02/replaced-security-force-assistance-brigades-vs-special-forces/>.

²⁴⁷ Meghann Myers, "Army Chief Dispels Rumors, Misconceptions about SFAB Berets, Tabs," *Army Times*, last modified October 31, 2017, <http://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/10/30/army-chief-dispels-rumors-misconceptions-about-sfab-berets-tabs/>.

warfighting functions like: logistics, intelligence, infantry, armor maneuver, and engineer support to operations. This is where the SFAB enters; an SFA force that is skilled in conventional warfare is best suited to train partner nations on its conventional security apparatus.

F. CONCLUSION

After sixteen years of protracted global conflict that has elicited military power projection and intervention from the U.S., the Army is now committed to SFA by creating six SFABs. The institutionalization of SFA in the form of the SFAB is in itself a tectonic innovation for the U.S. Army. The most recent NSS have articulated the strategic importance of SFA in fragile regions to pursue global security and protection of U.S. interests abroad. Since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Army has taken an increasing role in SFA that spanned from 11-man MiTTs, AABs, and led to entire BCTs that were regionally aligned to support SFA not only in the Middle East but also Africa, the Pacific, and Europe.

The approaches utilized by the U.S. Army have been ad hoc and reactive in the absence of doctrinal guidance. This is not to discredit the efforts of the U.S. military, as they operated without joint doctrine for years. Servicemembers never shrunk from the task as they adapted tactical processes that lead to organizational innovation; arguably, these men and women paved the way for future doctrine. BCT over-utilization for SFA missions had the unintended consequences of reduced readiness levels and perishing warfighting skills on the home front, and while deployed, BCT personnel did not have the skill set to properly conduct SFA. The Army's innovative decision to establish SFABs will enable BCTs to focus on its warfighting mission, safeguard SFA institutional knowledge, cultivate an SFA culture, and ensure SFA missions are conducted with a higher degree of proficiency, dedication, and professionalism. The SFABs are to be the only organization in the U.S. Army fully focused on conducting SFA in the most remote and dark corners of

fragile regions. Much is to be seen from SFABs as the first SFAB (of six) is currently operating in Afghanistan for its inaugural mission.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Phillip Wellman, "First Troops Among Front-Line Adviser Brigade Arrive in Afghanistan, *Stars and Stripes*," 22 February 2018, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/02/22/first-troops-among-front-line-adviser-brigade-arrive-afghanistan.html>.

V. CONCLUSION

A. FINDINGS

This thesis has studied the adaptations and innovations in U.S. Army SFA design with the implementation of the SFAB; it also critically examined the strategic policies and procedures that aim to meet enduring U.S. security objectives. The thesis examined two hypotheses and introduced an evidence chain to suggest both hypotheses were confirmed. First, the hypothesis that SFABs are being established to increase the warfighting readiness of BCTs, reduce SFA burdens on Special Forces, and secure resources to meet enduring security requirements was confirmed by examining the over-utilization of BCTs to assist in post-conflict zones, current readiness levels, and enduring SFA requirements. Despite the recent reorientation to great power competition with Russia and China as the principal foci, the U.S. Army, recognizing that SSA is an enduring mission from policymakers, has decided to commit organizational capital on the SFAB establishment. Second, the hypothesis that ad-hoc approaches taken by the U.S. Army up to this point were in fact a by-product of disjointed policy was also confirmed. Large resource disparities between the DoS, DoD, and U.S.AID have been an uneven foundation on which SSA operates; with the DoD filling the resource gap, it has overemphasized SFA, which is their primary role in SSA.

The U.S. Government has pursued an engaged and assertive stance since WWII to shape the global order in ways favorable to the U.S. and its allies. While the ways and means to achieve this end have shifted from decade to decade, the core guiding principles of the vision have been to secure free trade, the peaceful international order, and the prevention of hostile actors from dominating key regions. In pursuit of this vision, the U.S. has dedicated significant military and diplomatic capital in the form of overseas security commitments and forward deployed military power. National Security Strategies since 9/11 have placed a great emphasis on stabilizing fragile regions and ungoverned spaces due to the consensus that malignant nonstate actors can leverage such spaces to build combat power and project it at U.S. national interests – and in the worst case, across the oceans to the mainland. Yet, the fragile state problem is one that is more nuanced than current

approaches have indicated. The policy of security cooperation and building foreign militaries is in fact a military led solution and is directly tied to securing ungoverned spaces, territory, and population within fragile states.

This thesis offered a critical analysis of SSA policy and indicates that despite Executive and Congressional efforts to de-militarize U.S. foreign policy, loops holes such as the pseudo LOA, remain, which potentially give the DoD a streamlined procedure to conduct SFA that bypasses the whole-of-government approach. As SFA policy remains incoherent, SFA planners overlook the assumptions that militarized and technical approaches are best—automatically presuming measures of effectiveness to be the raw-data of how many “capabilities” are transferred and how many soldiers get trained. An over-reliance on SFA has largely led to other SSA programs being neglected; SSR and DIB are lost in the mix – these programs are designed to build infrastructure and institutional capacity in fragile states; yet, these programs that can secure SFA gains are unkempt. Implications of poor SFA policy and plans can have unintended destabilizing effects in fragile regions if not better integrated with SSR and DIB. While the U.S. continues to throw money at the problem, policymakers fail to scrutinize the root and underlying causes for faltering SFA efforts.

Theories of military innovation were examined to ascertain how the U.S. Army overcame organizational resistance to SFA. The U.S. Army’s decision to commit energy, capital, and man-power to a mission that is not consistent with the Army’s organizational essence and culture has not happened overnight. Like any organization, the Army has a doctrinal mission to do and will seek to sustain its core competencies, which are deeply rooted in its cultural identity; all of which SFA is largely inconsistent. This thesis found that the establishment of the SFAB originated from a blend of bottom-up tactical adaptations and top-down bureaucratic and organizational politics. As the research described, tactical adaptations to problem-sets in Iraq and Afghanistan heavily influenced innovations in doctrine and SFA organizations, while increasing operational requirements from policymakers necessitated the Army to overcome resistance to SFA.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. position in the world is unlikely to change anytime soon and the requirements to secure regions vital to national interests will remain a pillar of the national strategy. Previous researchers have largely arrived at the consensus that the U.S. government needs to evenly spread resources among the agencies and better ensure the whole-of-government approach is balanced to conduct SSA more effectively. This thesis will hone-in on SSR, DIB, and the pseudo LOA as areas for consideration. Broadly speaking, policymakers and SFA planners need to properly address planning assumptions and constraints in order to assess PN progress, ensure intent/interest alignment with the PN, and leverage all relevant agencies to achieve a shared and enduring security outcome.

The security gains made by SFA can only be held if there is more emphasis placed on SSR and DIB. These programs are tailored to aid the PN's safety, policing, justice, rule-of-law, and defense institutions. Policymakers should consider these programs be planned for and integrated with SFA efforts; decision points should be established to indicate when the SSA plan with a PN will transition from SFA to SSR and DIB. Assessments of PN capacity and capability should be highly scrutinized prior to these efforts. The U.S. government can no longer afford to train PN militaries at the tactical level while largely neglecting the ministerial/departmental institutions that will ultimately employ the military power delivered by security cooperation programs like SFA and SA. Additionally, the SSR and DIB programs are inherently more diplomatic; a refocus on these programs will naturally rebalance the DoS and U.S.AID into the SSA program at large. Finally, policymakers should pay closer attention to the DoD authorities with the pseudo LOA, which has served as a quick-fix to larger SFA problems and widely done without DoS input. If SFA efforts continue to fail or produce stalemate in fragile regions, the larger program of SSA will lose the confidence of our allies and the those who pay for the program—the American people.

C. FUTURE RESEARCH

Admittedly, this thesis narrowly focused on the SFA program of SSA and how the U.S. Army innovated its organization and doctrine to meet this enduring requirement.

However, the research of this thesis suggests that academia and think-tanks alike call for what is known as SSR and DIB. As such, future research should continue to look at these programs and how they can better be integrated with SFA efforts. For example, SSR and DIB program are inherently intrusive and would in many cases require the PN to vastly alter the way it conducts itself; perhaps this is why these programs are neglected for less-intrusive SFA programs. However, would the U.S. government be best advised to not commit capital in the form of SFA if the PN is unwilling to accept changes and aid in the realms of SSR and DIB?

Additionally, this thesis could not attempt to gauge how the SFAB is performing its mission. As this thesis is being written, the first SFAB is conducting operations in Afghanistan with follow on SFABs in training and preparing to deploy. As such, future research could look at how the U.S. Army continues to adapt its SFA organization and doctrine. For instance, discussion of creating an SFA division (SFAD) is already being entertained as the initial findings from the SFABs are showing a difficulty with integrating the brigade at the ministerial and institutional level.²⁴⁹ This topic could be of great value; as an SFAD would likely have a larger staff that could easily host DoS and U.S.AID liaisons, these touch-points could bridge the agency divide and bridge the gap between SSR, DIB, and SFA.

²⁴⁹ Rick Montcalm, "Beyond SFABs: Getting the Most out of the Army's Planned Higher-Echelon Advisory Units," Modern War Institute, last modified April 6, 2018, <https://mwi.usma.edu/beyond-sfabs-getting-armys-planned-higher-echelon-advisory-units/>.

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