A European Small State Perspective on Change within Special Operations Forces

A Monograph

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14. ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, changes in the global security environment have had a significant impact on the application of military power and special operations forces in specific. Small European states dealt differently with the profound challenges of the environment in which they operated. Poland Denmark and the Netherlands turned their interest to counter-terrorism, failing states, counterinsurgency, and ethnic civil wars. In the late 20th century, it became almost standard among armed forces in small European states to establish or reinforce SOF capabilities within their military structures. This research paper tells the story of how three small European states' SOF capabilities changed and adapted to their respective operating environment following independent change patterns since the end of the Cold War. SOF capabilities of small European countries face different national interpretations of their strategic contexts, operational challenges, aptitude to exploit disruptive technologies and organizational culture.

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Abstract

A European Small State Perspective on Change within Special Operations Forces, by MAJ Gijs P. Tuinman, 60 pages.

Since the end of the Cold War, changes in the global security environment have had a significant impact on the application of military power and special operations forces in specific. Small European states dealt differently with the profound challenges of the environment in which they operated. Confronted with a surplus of heavy conventional military power, constructed to fight a global war against the Warsaw Pact, Poland, Denmark, and the Netherlands turned their interest to counter-terrorism, failing states, counterinsurgency, ethnic civil wars, and nation and institutional capacity building. The steadily increasing importance of special operations forces in the last twenty years in national security and defense strategy is illustrative. In the late 20th century, it became almost standard among armed forces in small European states to establish or reinforce SOF capabilities within their military structures.

This research paper tells the story of how three small European states' SOF capabilities changed and adapted to their respective operating environment following independent patterns of change since the end of the Cold War. SOF capabilities of small European countries face different national interpretations of their strategic contexts, operational challenges, aptitude to exploit disruptive technologies and organizational culture.

Small European states follow an indirect approach facing complex security threats to build on collective defense. Small European countries strategically benefit from small, full spectrum capable SOF forces, able to deploy and rapidly adapt to their operating environment. Small European states that provide these forces gain political impact and higher standing in the international arena. Thus, a highly developed appreciation of the strategic utility of SOF by domestic political decision-makers, results in a top-down change strategy. The organizational culture of respective SOF capabilities explains, whether operational challenges are creatively solved through adaptation of existing ideas and solutions, or that emulation of techniques and equipment drives a bottom-up change approach.

Contents

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Acronyms

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
AUS	Australia
CAN	Canada
DA	Direct Action
DANSOF	Danish Special Operations Forces
EU	European Union
FKP	Danish Frogmen Korpset
GBR	Great Britain
GROM	Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno-Manewrowego (Group (for) Operational Maneuvering Response)
GSG-9	(German) Grenzschutzgruppe 9
GSN	Global SOF Network
JGK	Danish Jaeger Korpset
JSO	Joint Special Operations Directorate
KCT	Korps Commando Troepen
MA	Military Assistance
MINUSMA	(UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSTI	NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative
NSHQ	NATO SOF Headquarters
POLSOFCOM	Polish Special Operations Forces Command
QRF	Quick Reaction Force
RDDC	Royal Danish Defense College
RPA	Remotely Piloted Aircraft
SAS	Special Air Service
SF-ODD	Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta

SFTG	Special Forces Task Group
SOATG	Special Operations Air Task Group
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOKOM	(Danish) Special Operations Kommando
SOLTG	Special Operations Land Task Group
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
SR	Special Reconnaissance
TTP	Technique, Tactic and Procedure
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USSOCOM	United Sates Special Operations Command
VIP	Very Important Person

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, changes in the global security environment have had a significant impact on the application of military power. Large transformations have taken place in the militaries of Western states in order to stay ahead of rising state competitors and new non-state actors.[1] The purpose of these transformations followed a continuing necessity to change and adapt in terms of whom and how to fight, and improve interoperability and interdependence with other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partners in order to face the emerging threats on the European Continent. For special operations capabilities in large established states (United States, Great Britain, Australia and Canada) that was not any different. Small European state Special Operations Forces (SOF) capabilities followed a slightly different path. Collecting the peace dividend after the conclusion of the Cold War and reorienting themselves towards peacekeeping efforts within the European Union (EU), NATO, and the United Nations (UN), small European states developed different pathways to change.

Significant academic research provides clarity on the reasons, drivers, and schemes of change for large organizations or formations since the end of the Cold War.[2] However, the analysis of the consequent transformation of small forces with strategic implications to adapt to the contemporary threat environment has been remarkably under-studied, which causes a gap in the body of literature on military transformation and change.[3]

The steadily increasing importance of SOF in the last twenty years in national security and defense strategy is illustrative. SOF has become the primary force of choice of policy makers for battling terrorism, training indigenous forces, and conducting counter-insurgency operations

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[1] Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning, and Terry Terriff, *Transforming Military Powers since the Cold War: Britain, France and the United States, 1991-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

[2] Malcolm Braily, *The Transformation of Special Operations Forces in Contemporary Conflict: Strategy, Missions, Organizations and Tactics*, Working Paper no.127 (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2005), 2-3.

[3] Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 920.

worldwide.[4] In the late 20th century, it became almost standard among armed forces in Europe to establish or reinforce SOF capabilities within their military structures.

The US Armed Forces spearheaded the expanded reliance on SOF, and increased their strategic importance in national security policies and application of military force.[5] European countries soon followed. Most European countries had a Soviet-oriented Cold War focus concerning their security posture, in which their SOF capabilities mirrored that image.[6] For the Netherlands, this meant long-range reconnaissance units and a maritime domestic counterterrorism capability. Similarly, Denmark and Poland revealed parallel structures.

Reviewing the SOF capabilities of these countries today, a completely different picture emerges. The highly capable and diversified units of all three nations perform full-spectrum special operations, worldwide. Operating unilaterally or in joint or combined formations, coalitions and alliances, small European nations' SOF forces are capable of providing strategic-level effects to their nations' political decision-makers.

This research paper tells the story of how three small European states' SOF capabilities changed and adapted to their respective operating environments following independent change patterns since the end of the Cold War. SOF capabilities of small European countries face different national interpretations of their strategic contexts, operational challenges, aptitude to exploit disruptive technologies, and organizational culture. These four variables define the change strategy -- innovate, adapt or emulate -- a small European SOF capability follows to create strategic value to their nation's decision-makers. In doing that, these insights fill a gap in the bigger body of SOF knowledge and ties the perspective of small European SOF into the more

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[4] Emily Spencer, "The Future is Now," in *Special Operations Theory 3*, eds. Peter McGabe and Paul Lieber, JSOU Report 17-6 (McDill, FL: JSOU University Press, 2017), 121.

[5] Harry R. Yarger, *21th Century SOF: Toward an American Theory of Special Operations*, JSOU Report 13-1 (McDill, FL: JSOU University Press, April 2013), 2-3; Bryan B. Brown, "US SOCOM meeting: The 21th Century Security Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 1 (2006): 39-40.

[6] Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, *Transforming Military Powers since the Cold War: Britain, France, and the United States, 1991-2012*, 2-3.

robust academic work and discussion on SOF theory and SOF understanding in general. This research provides different angles on how small European countries try to get the most beneficial impact out of their SOF in support of their nations' interests. To understand the transformation process of small units, and to enhance the value and interoperability of small European SOF capabilities, research, insights, and understanding is essential.

The majority of research and literature on military change and adaptation focuses on testing rival theories on change, poses assertions, and cues new terminology, definitions, and theories. Instead of following one logic structure or line of reasoning, this research follows Peter Katzenberger's *theory blending* approach to create a richer understanding of how military change and adaptation of SOF in small European states takes place.[7] *Theory blending* creates the opportunity to use different conceptual frameworks and lenses within the same case study in order to reveal insightful ways as to how SOF communities of small European countries adapt to their changing operating environment. This study is explorative in nature and tries to achieve relevant knowledge, insights, and understanding by utilizing Robert K. Yin's qualitative case study approach, based on open source information and document analysis. Findings are compared between the three selected cases (The Netherlands, Poland, and Denmark).[8]

The first section introduces the theoretical framework for military change through a selected review of relevant academic change and adaptation theory. Section two defines the interpretation of special operations forces within the European paradigm. The third section contains the research findings from the three selected cases Poland, Denmark, and The Netherlands. This section explores the dynamics and mechanisms that different environmental aspects had on change and adaptation for the specific countries. The stories of the three countries

[7] Peter J. Katzenberger and Nobuo Okawara, "Japan, Asian-Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytical Eclectism," *International Security* 26, no. 3 (2001/2002): 166-168. See also, Theo Farrell, "World Culture and Military Power," *Security Studies* 14, no. 3 (2005): 451-452.

[8] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* 5th ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2013), 15-17.

reveal how they interact with their respective environments, and how that defines nuanced change strategies. Section four contains the analysis and explains the continuities and differences according to the theoretical understanding and insights discussed in section two. Section five closes with a concise conclusion.

Theoretical Understanding of Military Change

Change does not happen autonomously. This chapter explains the concept of military change, the relationship between military organizations and their evolving environments, and what drives and shapes military organizations to adapt to their changing operating environment. Furthermore, the review and analysis of relevant military change theory in this chapter reveals three different forms of change and four dominant drivers of military change, which together establish the analytical model, used in section four, to analyze the three different case studies.

Carl von Clausewitz's view on war as "a joust on a large scale and the act of force to compel our enemy to do our will," builds a foundation, which helps to understand the environment in which military change takes place. [9] Clausewitz believed that war cannot be seen in a vacuum, and war is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass, but always the collision of two or more living entities.[10] Adversaries learn from one's advantages and copy, adapt, and improve them. The interaction of adversaries makes war a dynamic and adaptive system, rather than a closed or equilibrium-based one.[11] No war or conflict is or will be the same, and according to strategist Colin Gray, the description of Clausewitz's nature of war is still

[9] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 75.

[10] Ibid., 87.

[11] James N. Mattis, "USJFCOM Commander's Guidance for Effects-based Operations," P*arameters* 38 (2008): 18-25.

applicable today.[12] Gray argues that the individual elements of war in the social, technological, and cultural context have changed. These aspects have always been varied from a historical standpoint.[13] Another renowned strategist, Harry Yarger says in his treatise *Toward an American SOF Theory* that the security environment in which war takes place forms by trends, which challenges the status quo.[14] Trends interact with each other and with the events, and actions of the different players in a war or conflict in ways that prevent prediction.[15] Theo Farrell, who extensively published on military change, reminds us that history clearly shows that war, and its specific environmental aspects, force states and their militaries to change in order to be successful.[16] Additionally, Williamson Murray rightly concludes in his book *Military Adaptation in War; With Fear of Change* that military organizations must also change in peacetime to confront not only the problems posed by their adaptive opponent, but to the reality, that technology is changing and advancing quickly.[17]

The end of the Cold War confronted Western European states with a surplus of heavy conventional military power constructed to fight a global war against the Warsaw Pact. However, when the peer-competition dissolved, Western decision-makers turned their interest to new things. Europeans engaged in counter-terrorism, failing states, counterinsurgency, ethnic civil wars, and nation and institutional capacity building. Not long after the Cold War, it became apparent that the military forces of these countries were facing a new security paradigm with

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[12] Colin S. Gray, "Clausewitz Rules, OK? The Future Is the past: With GPS," *Review of International Studies* 25 (1999): 162-164. See also, Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 378.

[13] John B. Alexander, *The Changing Nature of Warfare, The Factors Mediating Futures Conflict, and Implications for SOF* (McDill, FL: JSOU University Press, 2006), 1.

[14] Yarger, *21th Century SOF: Toward an American Theory of Special Operations*, 5-10.

[15] National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A World Transformed* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 2008), 3.

[16] Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell, *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1.

[17] Williamson R. Murray, *Military Adaptation in War; With Fear of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

unprecedented risk and requirements. No longer did the amount of combat power matter, but its agility to adapt and transform to meet requirements in unknown environments became the critical point. Political changes in national interest, differing views within Europe on the new world order, and new information and communications technology, combined with precision strike technology, would change the way wars were fought. Not surprisingly, for SOF in Europe the end of the Cold War was a turning point in how small states thought about the strategic utility of SOF on a national and global level.[18]

History clearly shows that war forces states and militaries to change. As historian Michael Howard suggests, "Military organizations inevitably get the next war wrong, mostly for reasons that lie beyond their control."[19] The foremost attributes of military effectiveness must lie in the ability of armies to recognize and adapt to the actual conditions of war, as well as the tactical, operational, and strategic challenges. This includes the political challenges that armed conflict throws up. Although most postwar evaluations conclude that the reasons for a lost war confound in the problematic attitude to change strategy, equipment, tactics, or operational approaches, the true causes are difficult to identify.[20] The seminal work in the field of military change is Barry Posen's *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, published in 1984.[21] Since then, a growing body of literature examining military change has developed, providing richer insights into the many drivers that may influence why and how large military organizations change and if they are successful. It would seem logical that military change is an inevitable outcome of the conduct of military operations, however it is not.

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[18] George Dimitriu, Gijs Tuinman, and Martijn van der Vorm, "Formative Years: Military Adaptation of Dutch Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan," *Special Operations Journal* 2, no. 2 (2016): 162.

[19] Michael Howard, *The Cause of War and other Essays*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 189.

[20] Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-3.

[21] Barry R. Posen, *the Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

Managerial sciences explain why it is not so evident that military organizations change in a natural and organic fashion. Military organizations, as other large bureaucracies, are traditional and conservative in nature and most of the time military change does not fit the organizational interests.[22] Preferring continuity and stability, and reluctant to change, military organizations are only inclined to change if the change can increase prestige, resources, autonomy or improve the survivability of the organization.[23] Williamson Murray goes even further and argues that the obedient, hierarchical, and disciplined nature of military organizations hampers the needed responsiveness and adaptability in a constantly evolving world.[24]

Discussing military change raises the broader question regarding what scholars mean by military change. Most scholars and authors concentrate on explaining major forms of change which military organizations are typically not likely to undertake, as change in doctrine, organizational goals, or new combat arms.[25] Gautam Mukunda's work on military innovation in the First World War talks about relative scales of change, which he addresses in his work on innovation, and draws a distinction between sustaining change and disruptive change.[26] The former improves the traditionally valued ways of war and the latter undermines the traditional way of war and establishes new values and challenges in vested organizational interests and beliefs. The research on doctrinal change is problematic as not all militaries have doctrine, for example. The importance of doctrine (how it functions and what it means) is bound to the specific

[22] Antullio J. Echevarria II, "Tomorrow's Army: The Challenge of Nonlinear Change," *Parameters* 28 (1998): 85.

[23] Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*: *Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1999), 231; Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, "Military Change in the New Millennium," in *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology*, eds. Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2001), 271.

[24] Murray, *Military Adaptation in War; With Fear of Change*, 18-19.

[25] Farrell and Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change; Culture, Politics, Technology*, 4.

[26] Gautam Mukunda, "We cannot Go On: Innovation and the First World War Royal Navy," *Security Studies* 19, no. 1 (2010): 126-127.

national context of countries. Outside of that, doctrine does not always alter the way organizations conduct military operations.[27]

Farrell and Terriff introduce another perspective on change through the following definition "changes in the organizational goals, actual strategies, and/or structure of a military organization." Followed by "the adoption of a new primary mission, abrupt change in the prosecuted strategy in military operations and military organizations, which restructures itself."[28] Farrell and Terriff's framework recognizes three pathways whereby military change occurs. First is emulation, which involves importing new tools and ways of war through imitation of other military or civilian organizations. Secondly, there is adaptation, which involves adjusting existing military means and methods to a perceived contextual understanding of the environment. Lastly, there is innovation, which involves developing novel military technologies, tactics, strategies, and structures. Besides pathways, there are other organizing mechanisms to understand and categorize change.

Murray brings up an interesting point that military change follows different routes. At first, military adaptation occurs in time of war. There is little time to change, but there is a constant feedback cycle, as concepts see life and are successful or not. The operational effects and results of conflict identify flaws and gaps in the new solution and concurrent adaptations can help remedy the problem. Military innovation, on the other hand, is similar concerning the process, but the environment wherein it happens is structurally different. Murray views military change in a peacetime environment as innovation. There is plenty of time available to think through barriers and challenges, but the confrontation and learning loop of real-time war is lacking.[29]

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[27] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 15-17.

[28] Farrell and Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change; Culture, Politics, Technology*, 4-6.

[29] Murray, *Military Adaptation in War; With Fear of Change*, 2-3.

A third perspective on change in military affairs converges around the idea of direction. Change is the transformation that manifests itself through a top-down or bottom-up approach. This can be prevalent in peacetime during exercises, training or academic scholarship, as well as during combat situations. Innovation is associated with the top-down approach, which implies significant change. Political, civilian, or military-strategic leadership mostly imposes this upon the military organization.[30] Organizational theorists show that significant change has to be managed and imposed from the top.[31] Barry Posen builds on this and posits that, especially for military organizations, change needs civilian leadership.[32] Bureaucratic-political interest often blinds the military leadership for not seeing the need for change. The national policy community best manages major change that includes military and civilian leaders, and seldom surfaces from the operational or tactical levels of the military.[33]

As illustrated above, major military change has had the attention of the scientific community for the last 30 years. Meanwhile, minor military change and bottom-up initiatives held little interest within the social sciences. Notwithstanding, this bottom-up approach means that lessons are identified during the practice of operations and primarily focus on adjusting the current systems, functions, organization or equipment. In other words, the change starts at the lower levels and receives resources later. Minor change is mostly associated with adaptation or emulation, resulting in copying or adjusting existing military means and methods and with limited impact on strategy and organizational structures of the military organization.

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[30] Williamson R. Murray, "Innovation: Past and Future," in *Military Innovation*, eds. Williamson R. Murray and Alan R. Millett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 306.

[31] James G. March, *The Ambiguities of Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 306.

[32] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, 25-27.

[33] Kimberly M. Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Intervention, 1955-1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 21-26.

James Russel's study of the US Army and USMC in Iraq in 2005-2007 shows that adaptations can, and often do lead to major change and transformation. Multiple adaptations and lessons accumulate over time and gradually reinforce each other to the evolution of new methods, means, organizational structures, and strategy.[34] The assumption that military adaptation is about the lesser significance of change is problematic. Adaptation at the lower level, such as adapting tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP's) can accumulate to significant change in a military's capability or approach to operations. Failure to adapt at the tactical level may result over time in strategic failure.[35] The distinction between major and minor military change is relevant, but it is not fruitful to draw too fine of a distinction.[36]

The study of military change, adaptation, and emulation discovers a multitude of perspectives, approaches, and underlines the general point that military change has various sources. The military change literature speaks of four sources or shapers of military change; organizational interests (strategic context), feedback and lessons learned from operational experiences, emerging technology, and military culture. These shapers are all relevant in times of war as in peace, fit with bottom-up and top-down approaches, and are observed as drivers in innovation, adaptation, as well as emulation.[37]

War is not self-referential autonomous behavior, rather it deals more importantly with context. The strategic context is an important driver that shapes the process whereby militaries respond to imperatives and challenges from the changing environment to adapt. Barry Posen and Stephen Rosen both posit that the most obvious driver for military change is strategic, namely, a

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[34] James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation and War: Counterinsurgency in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces Iraq, 2005-2007* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13.

[35] Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Intervention in Iraq* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 111.

[36] Farrell and Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change; Culture, Politics, Technology*, 23-26.

[37] Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell, *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 14.

changing threat to national security. Posen builds further on this idea and argues that military adaptation is most likely when strategic considerations -- the prospect of defeat -- generate direct political pressure.[38] Kimberly Zisk however, argues that strategic developments, such as a change in the balance of powers, a new strategy, or a change in the external threat appreciation by the military organization can trigger military change.[39] Strategist Colin Gray further elaborates that geopolitics have a lot to say about the strategic context in which military adaptation resides. These ideas underline the importance of the strategic context as a predominant driver for change, because the strategic context informs politicians, who subsequently determine the tasks, and missions assigned to armed forces by policy, in the light of expected difficulties and opportunities, especially those created by the perceived enemy.[40]

A further breakdown of strategic context is necessary to understand what it consists of and how those parts influence change. Strategic context can be broken up in their different parts. First, domestic politics affect decisions concerning changes in strategy, force levels, resources, and purpose of military capabilities. Second, alliance politics are relevant in the way that countries, working within an alliance (such as NATO), invariably involve themselves with compromise, deliberation, and alliance policy and expectations often at the cost of freedom of action and speed of action.[41] Glenn Snyder, a political science scholar, points out in his work *Alliance Politics* that countries in alliances face the dilemma of doing too much (providing a free ride for other nations), or doing too little (being sidelined, and rejected by the lead nation).[42] The

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[38] Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, 220-221.

[39] Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Intervention, 1955-1991*, 17-18.

[40] Colin S. Gray, *Recognizing and Understanding Revolutionary Changes in Warfare: The Sovereignty of Context* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), 18-19.

[41] Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 23.

[42] Ibid., 24; Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost its Way* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

third part, strategic culture is the sum of beliefs about the use of force that the military and policy communities of a state share.[43] A country's strategic culture can foster or limit military adaptation, as a country makes specific alternatives for military adaptation possible, and rules others out. The strategic culture frames the way countries see the world, which guides them to see and understand challenges while ignoring others. Military change will usually be consistent with the core norms and identity within the strategic context of that time.[44] At this time, the military adaptation process punctuates the strategic cultural equilibrium of a country when it pushes beyond the boundaries of acceptable behavior and reshapes the strategic context, which implies major military and political change.[45] Thus, strategic context can also drive change short of a failing or losing war, forced by the political or military leadership.[46]

Besides strategic context, pressures and tensions from operations in war are another important driver of military change.[47] These pressures can take the form of new operational challenges or intensifying existing ones. The organic nature of the changing operating environment challenges the means and ways traditional military organizations take to war. These operational challenges express and manifest themselves at every level of operations -- technical, tactical, operational, as well as strategic -- and drive change over time.

Since the Industrial Age in the nineteenth century, new machines, systems and methods enabled by new technology, often overcome operational challenges. Technology manifested itself as a driver of change that became a major element in military effectiveness in the last 150 years.[48] By the Twentieth Century, adaptation driven by technology persisted on the increasingly complex

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[43] Farrell, Osinga, and Russell, *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, 14.

[44] Terry Terriff, "Warriors and Innovators: Military Change and the Organizational Culture of the U.S Marine Corps," *Defence Studies* 6, no. 2 (2006): 216-217.

[45] Farrell, "World Culture and Military Power," 452-453.

[46] Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Intervention, 1955-1991*, 24-25.

[47] Murray, *Military Adaptation in War; With Fear of Change*, 3.

[48] Ibid., 2-3.

battlefield, and also moved into peacetime operations. New technologies often provide imperatives and opportunities for military change, adaptation, or emulation. The emergence of new technology on the battlefield creates new operational challenges, which in turn generate new requirements for newer technology. However, technology does not create change in itself. Technology needs accompaniment of organizational and doctrinal changes in order to meet the requirements of the new operational environment and to realize new ways to fight and conduct warfare.

Technological progress does not follow a natural track, where better, more advanced ones in a Darwin-like order of succession replace existing technological artifacts.[49] Sociologists who contend that there is nothing deterministic about technological development have challenged this technological determinism.[50] The social process decides on the dominant design and not effectiveness or efficiency of the solution. Social networks determine if a technological solution fits a military operational challenge, which may oppose a technological design or novelty, because it threatens the organization's routine, position, and structures.[51]

As mentioned, technological development does not create change or military transformation alone. Organizational military culture is the de facto change catalyst. Military culture is no more homogeneous than war itself. Interpreting Edgar Schein's idea of culture, military culture is the elaborate social construction of creative intelligence, through which we come to imagine war in a particular way and to embrace certain rationalizations about how war

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[49] Colin S. Gray, "Arms Race and Other Pathetic Fallacies: A Case for Deconstruction," *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 3 (1996): 332.

[50] Thomas P. Hughes, "The Evolution of Large Technological Systems," in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, eds. Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas, P. Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 50-52; Merrit R. Smith, "Technological Determinism in American Culture," in *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, eds. Merrit R. Smith and Leo Marx (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 2-5.

[51] Lance C. Buhl, "Mariners and Machines: Resistance to Technological Change in the US Navy, 1865-1869," *Journal of American History* 61, no. 3 (1974): 717.

should be conducted and for what purposes.[52] Military culture on all levels produces persistent patterns of behavior that institutionalizes and dictates the way these communities solve problems.[53] Once these organizational behaviors institutionalize, the cultural norms are accepted or enforced by powerful sanctions.[54] This explanation highlights reasons why military culture is useful in understanding how and why military communities change in ways that are inconsistent with perceived strategic, operational, or tactical challenges. Successful change is dependable on the organizational culture, the imagination and vision of leaders, and the institutionalized behavioral experiences with problem solving in their respective environment.[55]

The convergence of the existing ideas and concepts from different academic fields on military change, the relationship between military organizations and their evolving environment, and what drives and shapes military change, delivers an analytical tool to understand how small European SOF communities change. The four drivers for change (strategic context, operational challenges, technology, and culture) help explain why specific countries' path of change (emulation, adaptation, and innovation) prevails. Additionally, this analytical tool also facilitates the understanding why small European countries develop a bottom-up or top-down direction of change.

Small European States and Special Operations

In the last decade, there have been enormous developments in the international discussion on the use of SOF and the execution of special operations. Similar is the case in a lesser extent in

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[52] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 17.

[53] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolutions in Military Affairs in Russia, the U.S. and Israel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 145-147.

[54] Farrell and Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change; Culture, Politics, Technology*, 8-9.

[55] Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 19-21.

the Netherlands, Denmark, and Poland. The research on small European state SOF and special operations lacks critical attention, which is also accentuated by the limited amount of available empirical data. Although most European readers will have at least an idea of what special operations are, there is no clear definition on the subject.[56]

Colin Gray defines special operations as "political-military activities tailored to achieve specific, focused objectives […] and conducted by units which adapt with great flexibility to the demands of each challenge."[57] NATO doctrine uses a similar definition: "Military activities conducted by specially designated, organized, trained, and equipped forces using operational techniques and modes of employment not standard to conventional forces. These activities take place across the full range of military operations independently or in coordination with operations of conventional forces to achieve political, military, psychological, and economic objectives. Politico-military considerations may require covert or discreet techniques and the acceptance of a degree of physical and political risk not associated with conventional operations."[58] According to NATO, the principal tasks of SOF are Special Reconnaissance (SR), Direct Action (DA), and Military Assistance (MA).[59] NATO doctrine ultimately provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for SOF to its member nations.

Nevertheless, the national interpretation of SOF by Poland, Denmark, and the Netherlands are susceptible to the strategic context of the individual countries. The successful deployment of SOF has led some European countries to argue that SOF-dominated campaigns

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[56] Braily, *The Transformation of Special Operations Forces in Contemporary Conflict: Strategy, Missions, Organizations and Tactics*, 2-3; Stephan Sjoberg, *The Evolution of French Special Forces, Experiences from the Past, Adapted for the Future* (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2004), 47-52; Torgeir Gratrud, *Norwegian Special Forces: Their Role in Future Counterinsurgency Operations* (Philadelphia, PA: US Army War College, 2009), 6-15; George Dimitriu, Gijs Tuinman, and Martijn van der Vorm, "Formative Years: Military Adaptation of Dutch Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan," 146-150.

[57] Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 151.

[58] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations* (AJP 3.5), ratification draft 1 (Brussels: NATO, 2009), 24.

[59] Ibid.

might be the optimal way of warfare in order to support national strategic policy aims. Reinforced by US SOF veteran Kalev Sepp's statement that "Special Forces are in the best political and military position to provide a sufficient answer, the better option, and the weapon of choice to respond to the conflicts of the new century."[60] Contrarily, small European countries employ SOF for a myriad of tasks and purposes, mostly where they can provide the most beneficial impact in support of their nation's strategy or challenges.[61] The increased importance or perceived strategic utility of small state SOF cannot solely be credited to SOF's own merit. With growing public European aversion to, and decreasing political willingness for long, large-scale military commitments after the Cold War, for some European countries, SOF presents a cost-effective alternative to large conventional forces.

The small European state SOF communities' cultures foster and encourage critical thinking. Additionally, SOF leadership maintains trust and confidence in the operators, allowing them freedom to present their ideas and explore alternatives. European decision makers are aware that SOF operational designs and techniques are particularly relevant in ambiguous, uncertain, and changing environments.[62]

Three Small European State Cases of Change

Poland

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Poland has been struggling with reform throughout its SOF. The main issue revolves around Poland's inability to shed the Warsaw Pact heritage and adjust the Polish SOF to modern challenges and, specifically, NATO membership.

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[60] Kalev I. Sepp, "Special Forces," in *Understanding Counterinsurgency: Doctrine, Operations and Challenges*, eds. Thomas Rid and Thomas A. Kean (New York: Routledge, 2010), 128-130.

[61] Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, 196.

[62] NATO, *Special Operations Forces Study* (Brussels: NATO, 2012), 26-27.

The initial unpreparedness of Polish SOF to function within the NATO-alliance in either intellectual or technological terms, following the Polish pivot to Western powers in 1990, reinforced one of the major challenges of balancing the potential military requirements with a realistic purpose and task for Polish SOF.[63] The recent resurgence of Russian aggression on Poland's Eastern border created a perceived existential threat that added an additional layer of complexity to the Polish quagmire involving transformation of their Warsaw Pact-style SOF. This hampered Poland's SOF to transform into an adaptive, agile, and potent Polish SOF enterprise that meets Polish perceived current and future challenges, nationally and in a NATO-alliance structure.

Polish Thinking on Special Operations Forces

The history of Polish special operations dates from the Polish Independence War in 1918, during which Poland applied clandestine special operations, due to its political sensitivity and lack of Polish military resources available to conduct conventional operations.[64] In the Interwar Period, Poland experimented with SOF on their Eastern border with Russia and started dropping SOF soldiers from airplanes using parachutes.[65] In 1939, Poland emulated the Italian and Japanese innovation concerning the manned torpedo -- a self-sacrificing human torpedo -- to

[63] Krystian Piatkowski, "Polish Special Forces: In Search of a New Posture," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 11, no. 3 (1998): 105-106.

[64] During a series of uprisings of the Poles and the Polish Silesians from 1919-1921 in Upper Silesia against the German rule, Polish SOF developed. Their main role was protecting Polish activists and people from German terror and retaliatory operations, by applying irregular warfare methods. Small teams of veteran soldiers operating autonomously, but linked in their purpose, to achieve a detrimental psychological effect on the Germans to establish and secure the polish-German border, without escalating the conflict into major war. Darius Dachowitz and Edgar Vincent, *The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World: Warsaw* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1977), 14-17.

[65] Hubert Krolikowski*, Historia Dzialań specjalnych od wojny trojańskieje do II wojny światowej* [History of Special Operations from Trojan War to the Second World War] (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2004), 174-186.

defend the country by attacking German battleships in the Baltic Sea.[66] In the post-war area, Poland lost its innovative character when SOF had to comply with the Warsaw Pact doctrine, which called for a close relationship between SOF and operational (conventional) forces. Polish special operations units were usually subordinate to operational level (army) commanders. SOF units executed offensive missions in support of ground force commanders within the strategic defensive operation detailed by the Warsaw Pact's collaborative defense plan.[67]

The new strategic security context after 1990 was pivotal in the transformation and thinking of Polish SOF. New challenges, resulting from political, economic, and military transformations in Europe arose, which influenced the shape, form, and purpose of the Polish Military Forces, at large.[68] Poland, subsequently, changed its way of thinking about its national security. Although Poland freed itself from Russia's political, economic, and military strangle, it was still vulnerable and weak on its own. In order to position Poland advantageously in Europe and bolster its national sovereignty with European partners in a collective defense concept, Poland defined two strategic objectives: firstly via the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and secondly, its' European Union membership.[69] In order to become part of NATO, Poland had to change its armed forces, structure, capabilities, and doctrine to add value and integrate Polish combat power into the NATO enterprise. Large armored units based on Russian Deep Operation doctrine were considered obsolete to NATO.[70]

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[66] Dariusz Dachowitz and Hubert Krolokowski, *Polish Special Operation Forces & Special Operations: Historical Outline and Present Days* (Warsaw: Tactyka I Strategia, 2016), 17.

[67] Piatkowski, "Polish Special Forces: In Search of a New Posture," 109-110.

[68] Witold Rodkiewicz, "Poland as an Ally," in *Global Allies Comparing US Alliances in the 21st Century*, ed. Michael Wesley (Australia: Australian National University Press, 2017), 133.

[69] Boguslaw Pacek, "Special Operations Forces; Historical Background and the Latest Developments," *Strategic Impact* 4 (2012): 80.

[70] The Soviet Union developed Deep Operation doctrine for its armed forces during the 1920s and 1930s. The doctrine emphasized destroying, suppressing, and disorganizing enemy forces not only at the line of contact, but throughout the depth of the battlefield.

These outdated Soviet concepts and ideas still founded the conceptual framework of the thinking of the Polish military establishment, including the SOF community after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.[71] In 1991, an opportunity arose for the Polish SOF to break away from the Warsaw Pact heritage. The newly formed Polish special operations unit, GROM, emerged to act as a hostage rescue force.[72] GROM received extensive assistance from respected NATO SOF units, such as British Special Air Service (SAS), German special border police unit (GSG-9), and US Special Forces Operational Detachment Delta (SF-ODD) in shaping the unit's profile, structure, tactics, and training.[73] These bilateral relations created important strategic venues for Poland to learn, and more particularly, to display the broader Polish professionalism and capabilities in NATO and UN operations in former Yugoslavia, in the 1990s. After joining NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004, Poland again changed its way of thinking about national security.[74] Poland relied upon NATO's Article-5 (collective defense), instead of building a consistent, strong, and long-term territorial defense army.[75]

Additionally, the strategic context was further complicated by tensions and instability caused by international terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the unpredictability of unstable autocratic regimes. Not only had the reliance on special operations increased, but also the complexity, sophistication, and the scope of SOF missions and roles broadened. For Poland, the Global War on Terror created a welcome venue to learn, adapt, and exploit Polish SOF in order to gain further credibility, political standing, influence and politico-

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[71] Dachowitz and Krolokowski, *Polish Special Operation Forces & Special Operations: Historical Outline and Present Days*, 39-41.

[72] GROM stands for Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno-Manewrowego (English: Group (for) Operational Maneuvering Response); the acronym is the word for thunder. GROM is one of the five special operation forces units of the Polish Armed Forces.

[73] Dachowitz and Krolokowski, *Polish Special Operation Forces & Special Operations: Historical Outline and Present Days*, 47; Karolina Kusmirek, "Polish Special Operations Forces: Role and Missions in Afghanistan," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 1, no. 3 (2015): 33.

[74] Tomasz Paszewski, "Can Poland Defend Itself?" *Survival* 58, no. 2 (2016): 118.

[75] Rodkiewicz, "Poland as an Ally," 134-135.

military leverage in European and other supranational institutions. Again, Polish SOF spearheaded the Polish Armed Forces attempt to strengthen the ties with NATO counterparts and build bilateral relationships.[76] In order to improve its reputation and influence in Europe even further, Poland declared its willingness to join the elite of NATO countries in 2013 by establishing a high quality Western-based SOF enterprise.[77] This political commitment set the Polish SOF up for a top-down approach for change in order to become a perfect tool to bolster collective security on Poland's eastern border, as well as to gain a firm place at the negotiating table of NATO and EU.

Polish SOF Reform: A Case of Top-Down Emulation

In the aftermath of the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact, Poland created three distinctive SOF units, the GROM, the 1st Special Commando Regiment, and the maritime SOF unit Formoza. This was a remarkable achievement considering that the Polish General Staff strongly opposed the reorganization, as they saw SOF as a one-time used asset.[78] During the fall of 1994, GROM operators deployed to Haiti for Operation Uphold Democracy, and replaced the US 1st SFOD-Delta and US Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) team six on request of USSOCOM. GROM executed VIP protection, QRF and hostage rescue based on the tactics and procedures learned from their British and American trainers, years before.[79] This first operational deployment disclosed Polish SOF to the eyes of the international community. In the opening

[76] Polish commandos return home from Afghan rescue mission. Statement by Polish Defence Minister Antoni Macierewicz in Wrocław, "Our SOF is the spearhead of our armed forces." in Radio Poland, *Polish commandos return home from Afghan rescue mission*, accessed May 10, 2017, http://www.thenews.pl/1/2/Artykul/313302,Polish-commandos-return-home-from-Afghan-rescue-mission.

[77] Pacek, "Special Operations Forces; Historical Background and the Latest Developments," 82.

[78] Dachowitz and Krolokowski, *Polish Special Operation Forces & Special Operations: Historical Outline and Present Days*, 67.

[79] Operational Mobile Reaction Group (GROM), accessed October 5, 2017, http://www.antyterroryzm.gov.pl/eng/anti-terrorism/institutions-and-servi/operational-mobile-rea/648,Operational-Mobile-Reaction-Group-GROM.html.

campaign of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Polish SOF (GROM) integrated within structures of a US Naval Special Warfare Task Group. Here, US SEAL teams attacked the Mina al Bakr Oil Terminal from underwater with the use of SEAL delivery vehicles. The Poles, lacking the equipment and training, used US helicopters, inflatable boats and emulated the US helicopter sniper platform for active fire support on their target, Kaaot Oil Terminal. The GROM operations in Iraq reverberated in the global media.[80]

The operational challenges Polish SOF encountered in Former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq led to bottom-up adaptations, such as the procurement of specific equipment, change in tactics, techniques, and procedures and small organizational changes. Polish SOF were primarily oriented to direct action type missions, short offensive actions aimed at pre-planned targets, aggressively executed. For example, GROM operatives favored to work with US Navy SEALs above Army SOF, because SEALs did not plan "painfully precise."[81] Problem solving happened when challenges became real during the execution phase of operations. Following, the Poles merely copied or borrowed TTPs, equipment, and operating concepts from British SOF, or US colleagues.[82] In short, Polish SOF detailed pragmatic and functional responses to operational challenges experienced in the field, which were specific to the mission and resulted in minor organizational change.

Top-down change affected the entire Polish SOF community from 2005 forward. The Polish SOF success from the Yugoslavia and Iraq missions translated on August 10, 2005 into the transformation of the Special Operations Department in the Staff General of the Polish Armed Forces into the Polish Special Operations Directorate. This Special Operations Directorate now largely facilitated the coordination of training and operations for Polish SOF units. This enabled

[80] Mike Ryan, *Special Operations in Iraq* (Barnsley: Pen&Sword, 2004), 69.

[81] Andrzej K. Kisiel, *Thirteen: My Thirteen Years in Polish Special Missions Unit GROM* (Poland: eLitera Warsaw, 2012), ch. 7.

[82] Ibid.

the professionalization of training and education of the SOF community within Poland, but especially abroad.[83] The development of the Polish SOF command structure started in 2005, however it gained steam in 2006 after the release of the amended policy of NATO Military Committee on Special Operations (MC437-1) and the publication of the NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative (NSTI).[84] Polish SOF carefully analyzed the ideas from these documents and fully adopted the concepts in their development of a joint SOF command structure, in line with NATO's conceptual framework. Concurrently, the Polish SOF Directorate prepared and planned the establishment of the Polish Special Operations Forces Command (POLSOFCOM), formalized in January 2007. As a new branch of the Polish Armed Forces Command, on equal terms with the other services, Poland had created an equivalent to its NATO partners. POLSOFCOM enabled an equal-based relationship with USSOCOM, British, German, and French SOF headquarters. In 2009, the Polish President signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USSOCOM and POLSOFCOM to intensify combined training and exercises on the tactical level.[85]

This MOU would facilitate increasing numbers of USSOF teams on Polish soil. In 2013, Poland became the first new NATO member to be given so-called "framework nation" status in the area of special operations. This means that the Polish Special Operations Forces Component could establish itself and lead allied special operations. This was significant, as only a select number of NATO members have that capability in Europe. After obtaining NATO certification in 2015, the Polish Special Operations Forces Component and the units assigned to it (including

[83] Pacek, "Special Operations Forces; Historical Background and the Latest Developments," 81.

[84] NATO, *Military Committee Decision 437/1, Special Operations Policy*, June 11, 2006; NATO, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization Special Operations Forces Study* (Mons: NSCC, 2008).

[85] Jim Garamone, "US, Poland Sign Special Ops Memo of Understanding," US Department of Defense, accessed November 8, 2017, http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=53141.

those from other NATO states) went on combat duty as part of the NATO Response Force, serving as an Allied Special Operations Component Command.[86]

The roles and mission set of Polish SOF strictly followed NATO SOF doctrine. Polish SOF started with a Warsaw Pact role for SOF, which was subordinate to the conventional force area commander, solely offensive in nature and in support of regular forces at the corps level.[87] Supported by different NATO-SOF colleagues, Polish SOF units systematically grew more independent, shed the Soviet-style Cold War hierarchical compliance, and executed tactical activities with real strategic implications for Polish political decision makers. The strict focus on direct action missions directly after 1990 made place for full-spectrum special operations in accordance with the NATO definitions. Furthermore, Polish SOF followed USSOF's pivot towards the classical special warfare activities, focused on advising and assisting partner nation SOF in Afghanistan and Iraq after 2012.[88]

Explaining Polish SOF Top-Down Emulation

Polish SOF follows a predominantly top-down emulation strategy of change. The Polish strategic context appears to be the dominant driver behind Polish SOF-specific military change. The shared belief of military and political decision makers about the utility of Polish SOF as a vanguard to enable an advantageous position in NATO and the EU, explains the emulation of NATO SOF structures, doctrine and roles and missions. The perceived Russian threat from the East reinforces this emulation strategy, as augmentation of additional NATO SOF is essential in order to fend off any Russian incursion or function as a credible deterrence element. The idea of a

[86] Wojska specjalne, accessed June 3, 2017, www.wojskaspecjalne.wp.mil.pl/pl/41.html.

[87] Piatkowski, "Polish Special Forces: In Search of a New Posture," 111-112.

[88] Austin Long, Todd C. Helmus, Rebecca, S. Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt, and Peter Chalk, *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 94.

national Polish plug-and-play SOF structure enables strategic NATO partners to reinforce the Polish SOF enterprise quickly, effectively, and with relative ease.

The operational challenges Polish SOF encountered during missions in Former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Afghanistan led to minor adaptations and adjustments on the lower tactical levels. Although the organizational culture of the Polish Armed Forces in the first ten years after 1990 transpired a Warsaw Pact mentality, Polish SOF adapted relatively quick, developed a learning culture due to the close interactions with Western SOF units, and benefitted from the considerable degree of operational independence. All of this is evidenced by the top-down enforcement of the development of a separate operational SOF command on NATO's preferred characteristics. The emergence of disruptive technology did not drive the change process for Polish SOF. Poland complies strictly with the NATO network implementation paths rolled out by NSHQ for diverse communication and command and control systems. Additionally, the mission essential equipment of Polish SOF consists of a mix of classic Russian built weapons, vehicles and helicopters as well as more state-of-the-art Western Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), signal intelligence, and SOF command network systems. No technological incentives drive the Polish SOF community to change.[89]

The Polish top-down emulation pathway sets the Poles up for a gradual development of their SOF enterprise. The strategic utility of Polish SOF is evident to the Polish political decision-makers. Although the Warsaw Pact heritage at the tactical level dampens the bottom-up innovation of novel methods and approaches, close cooperation and partnerships with strategic SOF-partners fuels the organization with change initiatives, which are emulated top-down with relative ease.

[89] Ruslan Pukhov, "Elite Warriors: Polish Special Forces," in *Elite Warriors: Special Operations Forces from Around the World*, eds. Ruslan Pukhov and Christopher Marsh (Minneapolis: East View Press, 2017), 111-114.

Denmark

The end of the Cold War marked a radical change in Denmark's geopolitical position. From being a frontline state in a global conflict zone, the Danes witnessed world attention move away from Denmark.[90] Danish politics experienced a progressively more secure regional environment, culminating in the idea that Denmark was unable to identify any territorial threat to the nation in the near future.[91] Danish politicians understood that the conditions and the opportunities for Danish foreign and security policy were diminishing. Denmark consequently militarized its foreign policy and worked on reinforcing its relationship with Great Britain and the United States in order to prevent becoming irrelevant in international relations. Although several missions in conflict zones (Afghanistan and Iraq) received rigorous support by Danish combat power, the Danish political establishment did not view the SOF community as a politico-strategic instrument. It would take until 2013, with the decision to centralize all SOF units under a joint command, for the politicians and military leadership to acknowledge SOF's inherent strategic utility to Denmark.[92] The unrestrained, open, and creative problem-solving attitude of the Danish Army and Navy SOF was not able to drive significant bottom-up change through the Danish institutional powers after the Cold War. Instead, bureaucratic pressures and barriers from the

[90] Kristian Søby Kristensen and Kristian Knus Larsen, "Denmark's Fight Against Irrelevance, or the Alliance Politics of 'Punching Above Your Weight'," in *Global Allies Comparing US Alliances in the 21st Century*, ed. Michael Wesley (Australia: Australian National University Press, 2017), 61-62.

[91] Danish Government, "Globalt Engagement: Beretning fra Forsvarskommissionen af 2008," Ministry of Defence, 2009, 36, accessed October 7, 2017, www.fmn.dk/videnom/Documents/ Hovedbind-FKOM-2008-beretning.pdf.

[92] Danish Government, *Danish Defence Agreement 2013-2017* (Copenhagen: Government Printing Office, 2012), 11.

political and military leadership, who enforced a SOCOM organizational structure, gained the attention of Danish scholars studying special operations in depth.[93]

Danish Thinking on Special Operations Forces

The roots of Danish SOF go back to 1874, when a small and light unit crafted out of local hunters, who were primed to execute irregular military activities at the borders of the Danish territory, emerged. This early Army SOF (Jaeger) unit, which was later disbanded in 1953, had a purely tactical mission and purpose. In 1957, the Danish Navy SOF (Frogmen Korpset, FKP) was created. Additionally, during the height of the Cold War in 1961, the Danish Army re-established their Amy SOF unit (Army Jaeger Korpset, JGK), which was tasked with long-range reconnaissance. The JGK unit gathered information during the prewar-phase between the Warsaw Pact and NATO.[94] Danish Army JGK officers participated in foreign courses to include the US Army Ranger School and trained with the SAS in England in order to gain experience for the development of the Danish SOF unit. The American and British models aimed at producing commandos, who would conduct active offensive operations to destroy the enemy versus passive reconnaissance, aimed at gathering intelligence on Warsaw Pact militaries. The Danes did not emulate the British and American examples, but adapted their ideas towards long-range reconnaissance patrols by including combat roles such as sabotage and direct action.[95]

From there, the Danish Navy and Army SOF experienced a slow development path, with very few operational changes during the Cold War. The fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in the 1990s had political implications for Danish SOF. The reduced geopolitical-strategic

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[93] Nils Wang, Rear Admiral, Commandant at the Royal Danish Defence College in the foreword of: Gitte Højstrup Christensen, ed., *The Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Special Operations Forces, Conference Proceedings*, no. 4 (a) (2017): 5.

[94] Lars H. Ehrensvard Jensen, *Danish Special Operations – Comprehensive Reorganization and Innovation are Necessary* (Copenhagen: RDDA Publishing House, 2014), 4.

[95] Special Operations Magazine, "Denmark SOF: Jaegerkorpset and Froemandskorpset," accessed November 14, 2017, https://special-ops.org/sof/unit/denmark-sof-jaegerkorpset-and-froemandskorpset/.

tensions in European diminished the political urgency to maintain large, and highly ready military forces to deter or contain any Warsaw Pact threats to the NATO alliance. This became evident through the drop of Denmark's military strength and spending in the period 1989-2012.[96] This decline is further exemplified through Denmark's consideration to abolish the JGK in the early 1990s.[97] Where other Western European countries followed a strategic development of their SOF capabilities (Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, and Germany), the Danish political discourse related the value of SOF mainly to domestic purposes.

The outlook on the utility of Danish SOF did not change for a decade, until two airliners crashed into the Twin Towers in Manhattan, NY on 9/11. The role of the armed forces and especially SOF provided a possible answer to the new security environment perceived by the Danish government. Danish SOF deployed Task Group Ferret to Afghanistan in 2001 as part of USSOCOM-led Task Force K-BAR, the United States initial military response towards the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The deployment of Task Group Ferret was a military and political-strategic success for Denmark.[98] This deployment fulfilled the Danish political ambition of giving the United States rapid and relevant military support in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Although Task Group Ferret received the highest US military honor for foreign forces, only two additional Danish SOF patrols were added to the JGK, followed by a sizeable investment in technology. In all, Danish SOF did not develop significantly.[99] No fundamental change took place considering doctrine, organization, or mission profile at this time. According to Lars Ehrensvard Jensen, who intensively researched Danish SOF development and change at the

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[96] Centre for Military Studies, *An Analysis of Conditions for Danish Defence Policy – Strategic Choices 2012*, accessed April 23, 2017, http://cms.polski.ku.dk/cms/enanalyseafvilkaarfordanskforspolitk/Danish_Defence_english.pdf.

[97] The Navy SOF dogged political scrutiny because of the Navy's national tasks (search, rescue, and maritime assistance to other Danish agencies) in Lars H. Ehrensvard Jensen, *Danish Special Operations – Comprehensive Reorganization and Innovation are Necessary*, 5-6.

[98] Lars H. Ehrensvard Jensen, *Secrecy Hampers Strategic Use of Danish Special Operations* (Copenhagen: RDDC Publishing House, Sep 2014), 5-6.

[99] President George W. Bush, The Presidential Unit Citation, December 7, 2004.

Danish Defense College, the strategic value of Danish SOF after 9/11 had a domestic political flavor. "Politically, there was a great need to show that everything was done to help beleaguered [Danish] units, when Danish soldiers are in harm's way, we send the best we've got."[100] The employment of Danish special operations was a tool to minimize domestic political risk in the pursuit of national political ambitions through international missions.

In 2012, Danish SOF experienced events that led to significant reorganization and change. A government coalition signed the Danish Defense Agreement 2013-2017, which directed how the ministry of defense "will continue to contribute to safeguarding Danish foreign and security policy interests."[101] The agreement stated, at the same time, that Danish national security is safeguarded by international deployment of Danish military capabilities. The agreement recognized NATO and the UN as the cornerstones of Danish security and defense policy. The document set the overall framework for the purpose, organization, role, goals, priorities, and budgets of the armed forces. Furthermore, the Danish Defense Agreement of 2013 stated that the Danish Parliament decided that Denmark should follow other NATO countries and establish a Special Operations Command.[102] The rationale behind this decision was stated as: "The starting point is also in the future to target the special operations forces to the strategic challenges, rather than the present tactical focus."[103] The appreciation for the utility of Danish SOF started to change. Although it was never an argument to develop SOF in Denmark to act on strategic challenges and opportunities, it provided a window for higher political standing in NATO and the international community.[104]

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[100] Jensen, *Secrecy Hampers Strategic Use of Danish Special Operations*, 6.

[101] Danish Government, *Danish Defense Agreement 2013–2017*, 2-6.

[102] Ibid., 11.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ronny Modigs, "The Utility of Special Operations in small States," in *Special Operations from a Small State Perspective*, eds. Gunnilla Eriksson and Ulrica Pettersson (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 53.

Danish SOF Reform: A Case of Top-Down Adaptation

Lars Ehrenvald Larsen argues in a 2014 Royal Danish Defense College (RDDC) research paper that Danish SOF are among the least developed in NATO in terms of strategy, doctrine, and organization.[105] This is a supportable thesis, which builds on the lack of political interest and understanding in special operations and the top-down adaptation path followed to implement change. However, fast-paced change occurred after the political awareness of SOF and the appreciation of the strategic context lined up with the creation of a joint SOCOM organization in 2013. This development of the Danish SOCOM was politically pushed down on the Army and Navy service organizations.

This followed the narrative that Denmark had to follow their strategic military partners in establishing a joint SOF command in order to stay valued as a strategic level partner. The recognition of the need to strengthen and increase DANSOF capabilities and capacities led to the idea of placing the two DANSOF units, the JGK and FKP, into a new and permanent joint special operations command (SOKOM). By doing so, the military leadership established formal structures to manage what had been informal communities. The overall political purpose of this command was to enable DANSOF to engage strategic challenges rather than serve in a solely tactical capacity. SOKOM, established in 2014, assumed command of DANSOF units in June 2015, with a two-star general or admiral in command under the Danish Chief of Defense. The command intends to reach an initial operational capacity for a Danish contribution to a strategic SOF-led mission by 2020.[106]

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[105] Jensen, *Danish Special Operations – Comprehensive Reorganization and Innovation are Necessary*, 3-4.

[106] Specialoperationskommandoen [Special Operations Command], *Paradigmeskift: Forsvarets Nye Specialoperationer – Chefen for Specialoperationskommandoens rammedirektiv* [Paradigm Shift: Commander SOCOM's Framework] (SOKOM: Ålborg, July 2015), 7.

The top-down adaptation process was not as obvious as the last paragraph suggests. The Danish SOF communities are globally renowned for the innovative spirit of the individual operator, which makes them the ultimate force to overcome operational challenges. The social scientists, Karina Mayland, Rikke Haugegaard, and Allan Shapiro even argue in their work on innovation, that experimental problem solving is the distinctive feature of the Danish Special Operation Forces' organization.[107] Transparent leadership and experimental problem solving characterized the dynamic environments in both SOF units, and center on the overall goal of optimizing operational effects. A free and open interaction of SOF staff and operators adapt existing TTPs, structures, and materiel to meet operational demands.

The Danish SOF leadership values a culture of friendly rivalry between the Jaeger and Frogmen, as competition allows units and individuals to compete for the best solution. At the same time, it aims for a solution that will work best in operations, and ultimately defeat the enemy.[108] The bottom-up approach for change is an integral part of the Danish SOF culture. The operators and specialists innovate in order to optimize and enable new methods and tools, as the overall focus is on improving methods, procedures, and weapons in order to obtain better operational effect.[109] Although innovation is in the DNA of the special operator, limited resources to implement innovative thoughts and ideas constrain organizational change. The initiative-takers have to suffice in adapting current doctrine (Danish, NATO, or US) and modify vehicles, weapons, and other equipment, due to lack of funding and acquisition authorities to buy adequate equipment for many upcoming missions.

The development of a Danish special operations air capability shows another case on the adaptive nature of Danish SOF. With the Danish SOKOM setting the requirements, terms, and

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[107] Karina Mayland, Rikke Haugegaard, and Allan Shapiro, "Thinkers at the Cutting Edge: Innovation in the Danish Special Forces, in *The Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Special Operations Forces*: *Conference Proceedings*, ed. Gitte Højstrup Christensen, no. 4 (a) (2017): 89-92.

[108] Ibid., 97.

[109] Ibid., 105.

criteria for supportive capabilities such as air support, the Danish FTK Business Case 2014-01 determined that the Air Force should develop a Special Operations Air Task Group (SOATG) in order to develop flying capabilities to support special operations.[110] The FTK business case describes that the SOATG should start with 47 people. Twelve officers within the air force's tactical staff are dedicated key SOF personnel. The remaining 35 are designated flyers within the four wings of the Danish Air Force.[111] The NATO SOATG concept is still the cornerstone of the intellectual thought on SOF air, however dedicated air assets are not the object of investigation. Denmark adapts the SOATG concept to their own strengths and beliefs.

The Danes shared cognitive belief is that human interface is decisive in air special operations. The pilots who fly helicopters and airplanes are subject to transformation, versus the technology. The nucleus of the Danish special operations air capabilities are dedicated aircrews, which are selected for their flying proficiency and special training in night and low-level flying, using conventional planes and helicopters.[112] The Danish SOATG operators are expected to plan and perform ambiguous operations in close cooperation with designated special operations forces.

Explaining Danish SOF Adaptation

The evolution of Danish SOF is marked by a period of limited lower tactical-level adaptation (1990-2001), where operators tailored their TTPs, equipment, and roles to reach optimal performance in what they perceived as mission success. Reductions in conventional military capabilities, and reaping the benefits of the peace dividend of the end of the Cold War, dominated the strategic context. In the 1990s, Danish SOF deployed to the former Yugoslavia.

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[110] FTK, *Etablering af en Special Operations Air Task Group samt Special Operations Air Task Units. FTK Business Case 2014-01* (Karup: Government Printing Office, 2014) 6-11.

[111] Specialoperationskommandoen [Special Operations Command], 7.

[112] Lars, H. Ehrensvard Jensen, *Special Operations – the Central Role of Air Capabilities*, (Copenhagen: RDDC Publishing House, 2004), 10.

Tasks included protection of important personnel such as ambassadors or ministerial staff, as well as special assistance to the Danish police. In the 2000s, deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia followed.

The lack of political insight and appreciation of SOF showed major deficiencies in the understanding of their strategic utility. Per Kaluund, the defense spokesperson for the Danish Social Democrats, reinforced this with his expression in the media in 2004: "The only thing we Members of Parliament and the Defense Committee have been told about the Danish special operations forces, is that they have operated on dangerous tasks on a high level, and that they have received recognition for their efforts by the United States and others… What the special operations forces have actually done and how many have participated, and if they have killed opponents, we do not receive any information about."[113] This passage clearly illustrates the lack of political interest and commitment for Danish SOF as an instrument of national power. In 2012, the political paradigm about SOF shifted with the acknowledgment that Denmark had to strengthen its special operations capability by establishing a dedicated command to provide strategic direction, and ensure the proper development and use of its national SOF capabilities.

At this point, the lethargy was broken, and a top-down organizational model was thrust upon the different services. Research conducted by scholars from the Royal Danish Defence College on the impact of imposing a rule-based, bureaucratic structure on a loosely self-organizing innovative community, shows restrictive and constraining effects on the natural bottom-up innovation present in the two SOF units.[114] The innovative root-level problem solving culture within the Jaeger and Frogmen, characterized by critical and creative thinking from the bottom, does not resonate well with the hierarchical SOKOM organization. Additionally,

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[113] Information, *Åbenhed om elitesoldater blev aflyst*, accessed October 4, 2017, http://www.information.dk/92878.

[114] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Organizing Special Operations Forces: Navigating the Paradoxical Pressures of Institutional-Bureaucratic and Operational Environments," *Special Operations Journal* 3, no. 1 (2017): 63-64.

technology did not play a major role as an initiator or facilitator of change. Denmark lacks the critical military industrial complex, as those of the United States or Germany, to facilitate Danish SOF units' ability to develop, test, and improve higher tier equipment.

The Danish top-down adaptation pathway is relatively new. The break in political perspective on the strategic utility of Danish SOF propelled the Danish SOF enterprise into a rapid top-down learn and change mindset. The new top-down change impulses from the political/strategic level has an impact on how Danish SOF teams solve operational challenges on the lower level. The bureaucratic culture, of the recently established Danish SOKOM, potentially hampers good ideas and solutions formed at the team level, to follow up for consideration at the Danish SOKOM-level.

The Netherlands

The role and position of the Dutch armed forces within Dutch politics have always been ambiguous. With the end of the Cold War, politicians viewed the relatively sizeable armed forces as obsolete. Force reductions and budget drawdowns severely limited the combat power of the Dutch military. The idea of collecting the peace dividend after the resolution of a war, although a cold one, was common practice after colonial wars in the 1900s, and the First and Second World Wars.[115] However, Dutch politicians understood that as a small state, territorial and sovereign integrity depended on strong partners and alliances. With a vanished existential danger from the East, the Dutch Army pivoted from a threat and deterrence-based force, into a capability-driven army. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dutch SOF transformed itself quickly from an elite long-range reconnaissance unit into a full-spectrum special operations capability. This nested perfectly with the Dutch ambition envisioned by the political leadership's ideas of a small and agile

[115] Jan Hoffenaar, *Een politieke aangelegenheid, en daarmee nooit een uitgemaakte zaak. De ontwikkeling van de hoofdtaken en het ambitieniveau van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht na de Koude Oorlog*, Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie (The Hague: Government Printing Office, 2009), 4-5.

expeditionary force, tailored to enhance the international stability with military missions supporting NATO, the UN, and EU in peacekeeping efforts.[116] Within this realm, the Dutch special operations community defined its own purpose, structure, and profile, while lacking enduring political interest and clear guidance from the political and military strategic leadership.

The Netherlands Thinking on Special Operations Forces

Since World War II, Dutch politicians perceived the Royal Netherlands Army SOF Regiments' Commandos and Maritime SOF soldiers as jacks-off-all-trades. The roots go back to the Second World War, where in the 1940s, the British Army trained Dutch Commandos as elite fighting soldiers for special missions against the German and Japanese forces.[117] As No. 2 Dutch Troop within the multinational special operations unit No. 10 (Inter Allied) Commando and *Korps Insulinde* trained by the British in India, the Dutch conducted long-range reconnaissance, sabotage missions, and destroyed military facilities in enemy-held territories. As Jedburgh teams Dutch intelligence officers infiltrated into German-occupied Dutch territory. These teams emulated the successful idea of training French resistance forces in the Northern part of the Netherlands after the failed Allied Operation Market Garden in 1944.[118] Through these successful military operations in World War II, the credibility of the exiled Dutch Royal family and Dutch government remained. Additionally, it reinforced the Dutch political standing and negotiation power in the international community right after the collapse of the German and Japanese oppression.

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[116] Kees Homan, *De Nederlandse krijgsmacht in transformatie* (The Hague: Government Printing Office, 2011), 154.

[117] Peter J.M. Laseroms, "De ontstaansgeschiedenis van het Korps Commandotroepen," *Carre* 30, no. 3 (2007): 6.

[118] Arthur Ten Cate and Martijn van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau: Dutch Army Special Operations Forces in Action in the "New World of Disorder"* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016), 12-14.

After World War II, the Dutch government envisioned a prominent role for SOF in the Indonesian Independence War (1946-1949). Lacking a clear mandate, oversight, and guidance for these special operations from the political and military leadership, Dutch commandos independently designed their new mission.[119] In 1964, a top-down change followed, which led to a major reorganization of the Netherlands Armed Forces. For Dutch SOF, this meant that three commando companies were disbanded and replaced with the 104th Surveillance and Reconnaissance Company, under direct control of the conventional Dutch 1st Army Corps.[120] Although the commandos were the eyes and the ears of the 1st Army Corps, they maintained their offensive skills in sabotage and direct action, through training and participation in international SOF exercises, for years to come.[121]

The end of the Cold War marked a paradigm shift for the Netherlands. As it created significant politico-strategic confusion on how to interpret the recent events in Europe. The importance of NATO and the EU for the Netherlands were more important than national interpretations and ambitions on the global stage.[122] As a small nation without significant national resources and the ability to trade space for time in case of military aggressiveness, the Netherlands was well aware that power projection and influence for a small state had to be with, and through supranational organizations, such as NATO, the EU, and the UN. However, with the disappearance of the *raison d'etre* for NATO, the alliance was also in a state of strategic

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[119] Barry G. Rockx, "Merdeka: Dutch Military Operations in Indonesia (1945-1950)" monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2016), 55-56. The notorious commando-leader Raymond P. P. Westerling was given a free hand to develop a counterinsurgency campaign and execute it according to what the local situation mandated loosely oversighted and directed from the Netherlands.

[120] In 1964 the Amphibian Reconnaissance Platoon of the Royal Marine Corps were considered SOF, conducting sabotage missions against enemy ships. Andy Kraag, "Forging Netherlands Maritime Special Operations Forces" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2012), 1.

[121] Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau: Dutch Army Special Operations Forces in Action in the "New World of Disorder*," 17.

[122] Hoffenaar, *Een politieke aangelegenheid, en daarmee nooit een uitgemaakte zaak. De ontwikkeling van de hoofdtaken en het ambitieniveau van de Nederlandse krijgsmacht na de Koude Oorlog*, 25-26.

confusion. This confusion -- how to make sense out of the changing environment – fostered a military-led bottom-up approach, which ultimately created change in the Netherlands military apparatus. [123]

In the Dutch policy letter, Defensienota 1990, the Dutch armed services developed and implemented plans to restructure their own organization, which enabled overall force reductions of fifteen percent in five years. Regardless of the changing security environment in Europe, Minister for Defense, Relus ter Beek, declared that the core tasks for the Army would stay the same. [124] This statement exemplified the hesitation of using the Netherlands armed forces and subsequently SOF, as a single instrument of national power in order to influence international security policy aims. Of further note, the Dutch constitution mandates the use of armed force and expresses the aim for maintaining international legal order and stability, based on ethical and moral values, constituted in the universal human rights of the individual. This mandate often resulted in a reduced appetite for the use of the Dutch armed forces in the pursuit of direct Dutch foreign policy aims. [125]

Within this realm, the thinking on Dutch SOF gradually evolved after initial successes during missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq (1991-1999). Political leadership recognized Dutch SOF for their ability to respond rapidly to crises, with a broad set of options and mission sets to deploy worldwide. In the wake of 9/11, the establishment of a special operations ministerial core group, which could authorize a special operation without notifying the Parliament beforehand, started an incremental progression of the political appreciation of Dutch SOF. The restrained

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[123] The threat posed by the Soviet Union and its satellite states.

[124] Relus ter Beek, *Manoeuvreren. Herinneringen aan Plein 4* (The Hague: Government Printoing Office, 1996), 65-66 and 84.

[125] The Dutch peacekeeping missions in Former Yugoslavia (1990s) signal the Dutch intention to by a “guide nation” to do something to prevent human suffering. However, this attitude led to restrictive Dutch caveats and limitation on the application of violence, which had a lasting impact on the the political commitment to the deployment of later SOF-operations. Rob de Wijk, “De voorbeeldige buitenlandse politiek van Nederland,” in *Nederland als voorbeeldige Natie*, eds. Win van Noort and Rob Wiche (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 95-96.

Dutch appetite to use military force to achieve policy aims, remained present in the Dutch debates on the participation of Dutch soldiers in Afghanistan from 2005-2010.[126] Nevertheless, the deployment of the Dutch Special Forces Task Group Afghanistan (SFTG-A 2005-2006), on request of the United States, to support the fight against international terrorism, by Minister of Defense, Henk Kamp, clearly highlights the political aim of improving the Dutch political standing in the international political realm. Nevertheless, the *9/11 Zulu* documentary, based on the experiences of SFTG Viper in Afghanistan in 2006, broadcasted in December 2006 on Dutch public television from journalist Vick Franke, clearly demonstrated the irritation of the SOF community with the waning interest and lack of understanding of the strategic utility of SOF by the political and military leadership.[127]

Most recently, the political commitment of a highly capable Dutch Special Operations Land Task Group (SOLTG) *Scorpion* (2013-2017), with a helicopter detachment to the UN Force Commander of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), signals a visible contribution to the UN peacekeeping effort. This Dutch contribution to the UN facilitated the Dutch bid in the elections for non-permanent representation in the UN Security Council 2018-2019.[128] Although Dutch SOF are increasingly seen as a political tool to enhance the reputation or standing of the Netherlands in the international community, political restraint, waning interest after initial success, and lack of strategic guidance, foster bottom-up change, but also hamper the exploitation of the potential strategic utility of Dutch SOF.

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[126] George Dimitriu and Beatrice de Graaf, "The Dutch COIN approach: Three Years in Uruzgan, 2006-2009," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 3 (2010): 432-434.

[127] *9/11 ZULU Special Forces at the Job*, directed by Vik Franke (NCRV, December 2006), DVD (Doculine, 2007). Vik Franke interviewed key leaders from SFTG Viper 2006-2007, Uruzghan, Afghanistan on how they perceived political support for their SOF-mission.

[128] Sebastiaan Rietjens and Jelle Zomer, "In Search of Intelligence: The Dutch Special Forces in Mali," in *Special Operations Forces in the 21st Century: Perspectives from the Social Sciences*, eds. Jessica Glicken Turner, Kobi Michael, and Eyal Ben-Ari (New York: Routledge, 2018), ch. 10.

Netherlands SOF Reform: A Case of Bottom-Up Adaptation

The official start of the reorganization of the Dutch Army SOF started in 1993. The Dutch SOF transformation team, charged with proposing changes to the Dutch SOF enterprise to the military leadership, gained inspiration through their NATO SOF allies (British SAS and USSOF) executed in Operation Desert Storm in 1991.[129] However, the mindset within Dutch politics and upper echelons of the armed forces was not yet ready for an active and more aggressive special operations policy. The political ambition for the armed forces focused on peacekeeping missions with no clear enemies or opponents, or active investigation and targeting.[130]

Nevertheless, the Dutch SOF transition team got a free hand. Despite hindrance from insufficient funds and modern equipment, a new commando unit (108th Commando Troops Company) emerged with the mission of conducting full spectrum special operations, specifically centered on offensive direct action activities. After the suspension of conscription and the restructuring of the armed forces in 1996 as a whole, a clear political or strategic-military vision with guidance and direction for the development of Dutch SOF, still lacked. Within the Dutch SOF community, the approach was clear; gradually extend the operational concept of Dutch special operations from within, rather than casting it in stone from the start.[131] This blended bottom-up adaptation of ideas and concepts of NATO allies, Dutch SOF experience, and creative thinking would serve as the hallmarks for the development of Dutch Special Operations Forces.

The watershed event for Dutch SOF was 9/11, which accelerated change and growth from within. New concepts were developed, tested, and translated into organizational structures.

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[129] Ten Cate and Van der Vorm, *Callsign Nassau: Dutch Army Special Operations Forces in Action in the "New World of Disorder*," 27.

[130] Ibid., 29.

[131] Ibid., 30.

In 2002, Dutch SOF still operated in a classical way. As the special reconnaissance unit for the conventional International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) command in Kabul, Afghanistan, Dutch commandos operated autonomously with eight-man SOF teams based on two vehicles. However, by 2005, this concept looked very different. The Dutch SFTG-A operated under the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force A (CJSOTF-A) in Southern Kandahar, Afghanistan, with eight SOF teams, a CH-47 helicopter detachment, and dedicated enablers, totaling 350 personnel.[132] The political evaluation of SFTG-A by the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs concluded that future deployment and professionalization of Dutch SOF should follow the lines of NATO and this new concept served as the future architecture of Dutch SOF task forces.[133]

The Dutch Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) concept, which became the cornerstone for future change, was developed internally and bottom-up through internal working groups. These groups studied how the SOTG-blueprint from NATO SOF Coordination and Control (NSCC) could be adapted to fit the Dutch SOF force structure.[134] The implementation of the SOTG concept as a foundational aspect of architecture led to several significant structural changes in the peacetime organization. An on-scene command team was added at the company-level, which could plan, prepare, and execute special operations within the SOTG construct. Additionally, Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC), RPA operators, and an intelligence cell reinforced the company command team, which enabled a SOF company to form the backbone of a SOTG, when deployed.

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[132] Otto P. van Wiggen, "De Nederlandse Special Forces Task Group (SFTG) in Operatie Enduring Freedom [The Dutch Special Forces Task Group (SFTG) in Operation Enduring Freedom]," *Carré* 30, no. 3 (2007): 36-39.

[133] The Netherlands Parliament, *Minutes of the Second Chamber 2006-2007*, 29521, no. 33 (The Hagu:, Government Printing Office, 2007).

[134] Erik Jellema, "Special Operations Task Group (SOTG): Operationele ontwikkelingen binnen het Korps Commandotroepen [Special Operations Task Group (SOTG): Operational Development within the Korps Commando Troops]," *Infanterie* 16, no. 2 (2011): 4-9.

SOTG deployments to Afghanistan with SFTG Viper (2006-2007) and SOTG TF-55 (2009-2010) reinforced the reliance on non-SOF enablers.[135] This inspired the Dutch SOF community, during another round of budget reductions on the Army, to develop a plan to convert one of the three Dutch Air Assault battalions of the 11th Air Assault Brigade into a *Ranger* special operations support unit.[136] This bottom-up approach to enable change is common in the Dutch SOF community, as demonstrated by their strong avocation for Dutch SOF to be embedded in an international SOF headquarters, as opposed to being subordinated to a conventional headquarters, experienced by SFTG Viper in 2006-2007.[137]

Organizational change prepared Dutch SOF for the new challenge of the 2000s. However, deployed Dutch SOTGs (SFTG Viper and SOTG TF-55) received minimal guidance and direction on what the mission or objectives were for the SOF deployment from the Netherlands, as well as the regional international command structure.[138] In addition, the lack of political guidance and direction for SOF task forces continued. The national political direction for the SOLTG commander in Mali was to "provide intelligence support to the MINUSMA Force Commander." Subsequently, the MINUSMA Force Commander had no idea how to utilize the Dutch SOF contingent, which further resulted in a lack of clear guidance, and direction at the SOTG-level.[139] This example presents a recurring theme for Dutch SOF, which results in a culture in which operational challenges should be resolved at the lower-levels. This happens by

[135] Dimitriu, Tuinman, and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years: Military Adaptation of Dutch Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan," 162.

[136] Department of the Netherlands Army, "Landmacht start experiment Ranger [Army Starts Ranger Experiment]," *Landmacht* 8, no. 4 (2017), accessed October 30, 2017, https://magazines.defensie.nl/landmacht/2016/08/04_landmacht-start-experiment-ranger.

[137] George Dimitriu, Gijs Tuinman and Martijn van der Vorm, "Operationele Ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse Special Operations Forces, 2005-2010," *Militaire Spectator* 181, no. 3 (2012): 129.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Rietjens and Zomer, "In Search of Intelligence: The Dutch Special Forces in Mali," ch. 10.

utilizing small and adaptive, autonomously operating units, which are flexible and non-bureaucratic.[140]

The slow progression of the establishment of a Dutch joint SOF command structure delineates the limitations of the Dutch bottom-up approach to change. The first thoughts on a Dutch Special Operations Command originated in 2000, with the establishment of the Joint Special Operations Branch (JSO), within the Directorate of Operations of the Department of Defense. The joint SOF command was a topic of great discussion and concern within the different services, and specifically the SOF community itself. Several internal investigations and research groups analyzed the risks and benefits of a national SOCOM-like structure.[141] Without a clear political mandate, service rivalry, and ambitions to maintain unit culture and identity, torpedoed the viability of a bottom-up change towards a unified command. The lack of Dutch intellectual and academic interest on the subject of special operations, further hampered constructive discussion.

Explaining Netherlands SOF Adaptation

Due to a lack of enduring political interest and an assertive attitude to resolve operational challenges, Dutch SOF developed a rather informal learning process, which suited the bottom-up adaptation process well. Furthermore, technology had a momentous impact on the change culture of Dutch SOF. The development of the Dutch special operations vehicle, the Defenture Vector, is a relevant example of how technology drove change within the Dutch SOF regiment.

In 2015, the cooperation among the Dutch high-tech automotive industry, research and development agencies, special operations soldiers, and world-class rally racecar drivers (Rally

[140] Dimitriu, Tuinman, and Van der Vorm, "Formative Years: Military Adaptation of Dutch Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan," 162-163.

[141] Michiel de Weger, *Steeds weer Speciaal: De Toekomst van de Nederlandse Militaire Speciale Eenheden [Always Special: The Future of the Netherlands Militaire Special Operations Forces]* (Breda: Nederlandse Defensie Academie, 2011), 38.

Dakar), delivered a high-quality product. In demand by other nations, the Defenture Vector provided a commercial impulse to the Dutch economy, at large, and outperformed the initial requested capabilities.[142] This, in combination with the development of autonomous GPS-directed parachutes, created unforeseen operational opportunities, which drove Dutch SOF advancement in doctrine, organizational structure, and potential political utility.

The Dutch SOF followed a bottom-up adaptation pathway. The Dutch Government had developed trust and confidence in the Dutch SOF capability since the multitude of deployments after 9/11, however Dutch SOF did not resonate strongly on the political and national agendas concerning international security, as demonstrated in Denmark and Poland. This clarifies the limited effectiveness of the Dutch bottom-up approach towards a joint SOF command in comparison with imposed, top-down changes, and illuminates the underrepresentation of the utility of SOF in Dutch strategic policy.[143]

Analysis

The three case studies provide insights into how SOF communities from small European countries change. However, to build further clarification on why these SOF organizations follow different change trajectories, a better understanding of the shapers and drivers for change is paramount. The four criteria for change derived from section one: strategic context, operational challenges, technology, and organizational culture are discussed below.

The appreciation of the strategic context, although different between the three cases, forms the dominant driver for change for small European state's SOF. The physical distance from

[142] Gert J. van der Wal, "Nieuw Gevechtsvoertuig van Nederlandse Makelaardij: Commando's leggen Vector op de Pijnbank [New Combat Vehicle Manufactured in the Netherlands: Commando's Put the Vector on the Rack]," *Armex* 99, no. 1 (2015): 6-13.

[143] The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, *Special Operations Forces: Schaduwkrijgers in het Licht van de Toekomst [Shadow Warriors in the Light of the Future]* (The Hague: Strategic Studies Printing Office Printing Office, 2015), 79.

the Russian border, for example, influences how small European countries perceive the threat. For Poland, Russia is an existential threat, while not so much the case for the Netherlands. Additionally, all three cases suggest that small states do not follow direct military strategies in order to achieve foreign political aims. Alliances are crucial elements in small European states' policies, which facilitate leverage and reinforcement of sometimes-benign national instruments of power from small states. In two of the cases (Poland and Denmark), national SOF is formally mandated by the political leadership as the capability of choice in order to leverage national power through supranational organizations. Although the Dutch case suggests as much, the political recognition of the strategic utility of SOF did not resonate back into top-down imposed change, as seen in the Polish and Danish case.

The core characteristic of SOF, the skill to solve complex problems, is well developed in all three cases.[144] The open and self-learning SOF communities of all three countries overcome operational challenges. Although Polish SOF is still shedding the hierarchical and compliance-based leadership style, progress starts to show. The bottom-up approach is the dominant way that SOF in all three cases engages operational challenges, as expected according to SOF theory.

The participation in a multinational SOF mission for a small European state does not necessarily address the perceived national strategic interest or threat directly as demonstrated by the Dutch SOF participation in the UN-led mission in Mali. This means that operational challenges experienced on the tactical and operational levels do not directly connect to the strategic and political level. For the Dutch, the effect of actually participating in the UN mission is enough to strengthen the resolve of the Dutch government for the bid for non-permanent representation on the UN Security Council. Operational challenges encountered within the Malian SOF operation did not impose strategic or political imperatives for top-down enforced change.

[144] Yarger, *21th Century SOF: Toward an American Theory of Special Operations*, 31-32.

The impact of emerging, disruptive technology on change within small European countries is benign. Only the Netherlands case offers marginal evidence that technological novelty influenced SOF adaptation, through a small industrial defense base in the Netherlands. This reinforces the idea posed in section two that the de facto change catalyst is not so much the emerging technology in small states, but the accompanying change in organizational culture.

This organizational culture functions simultaneously as both an accelerator for and obstructer to change. The Polish case highlights the impact of deeply ingrained Russian social and cultural experiences and models on the aptitude of individuals and organizations towards change. The Danish SOF features a high acceptance to change and bottom-up adaptation, because of their open-minded, critical, and creative stance towards problem solving. The Danes as well as the Dutch worked with limited resources and limited political interest in the early post-Cold War era, which facilitated an unrestrained critical and creative problem-solving mentality. However, the top-down implementation of a Danish SOCOM structure raised Danish concerns attributed to rigid bureaucratic processes and structures, which could hamper the acclaimed problem solving culture within Danish SOF.

Conclusion

Change does not happen spontaneously. Military institutions behave bureaucratically, are change averse, and protect the status-quo to protect the institution as a whole against environmental influences. Extensive research since the 1980s reveals four dominant shapers or drivers for military change. These drivers influence the way small European SOF communities change according to their evolving operating environments. Poland, Denmark, and The Netherlands reveal differing pathways and directions of change, although from a distance, they all look alike and share similar change experiences.

This research shows how the SOF communities of three small European countries followed their own specific transformation path. All three countries rapidly transformed from a passive state towards a full-spectrum SOF capable state, in very high demand at the strategic and political levels in their respective countries, in the area of international operations. This follows the rationale that small European states strategically benefit from a small and capable force able to rapidly deploy, when required by the international community. A small state that can provide such a force gains political impact and higher status. At times, SOF is the only option, and force of choice for a small state. Therefore, in the case of the Netherlands, Poland, and Denmark, SOF forms a capable, ready, valued, and often the only strategic option these small states have.

The analysis also validates the idea that small states facing complex security threats develop a more indirect approach, mostly through alliances or supranational organizations, in order to attain foreign policy aims. With small budgets and limited resources, military and political leaders need to make well-balanced decisions about when and where to employ military power. The political appreciation of the strategic utility of national SOF as a low-cost, highly versatile, and capable force affects the change dynamics for SOF. A highly-developed appreciation for the strategic utility of SOF, often results in a top-down change approach, as demonstrated in the Polish and Danish case.

The organizational culture of small European SOF more or less parallels the global theoretical foundations of the SOF characteristic, as a critical thinking and creative problem-solving mentality towards operational challenges. Nevertheless, as the cases project, fine differences in culture and mentality define how operational challenges on the tactical and operational levels drive change. This results in different approaches to change as demonstrated in the Polish emulation strategy, and the adaptation track used by Denmark and the Netherlands.

Understanding the transformation process of small European SOF capabilities enhances the value and interoperability issues of European SOF within the Global SOF Network. Additional academic research on small state SOF is increasing within academic discourse.

However, the question stated by Rear Admiral Nils Wang, in February 2017, in his address during the international SOF conference, concerning interdisciplinary perspectives on SOF remains valid: “Are [European] political and popular perceptions of SOF aligned with what SOF can and should actually do?”[145]

[145] Nils Wang, foreword of *The Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Special Operations Forces,* 5.

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