

PROXY FORCES, THE FUTURE OF THE LAND COMPONENT IN COALITION OPERATIONS?

A Monograph

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ABSTRACT

PROXY FORCES, THE FUTURE OF LAND COMPONENT IN COALITION OPERATIONS?
by Colonel Nicholas Lock, British Army, 54 pages.

This monograph examines the utility of Proxy Forces as a viable alternative to deploying a land component as part of a wider coalition campaign. Since the attacks of 9/11 the three major campaigns in which western nations have engaged have all had a proxy warfare component to them. Following stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with continued economic austerity, Western democracies may well be reluctant to commit ground forces to future crises.

An assessment of current doctrinal guidance and the historical context of proxy force operations will provide the reader with the necessary tools with which to evaluate two contemporary studies. These studies, Afghanistan (2001/2002) and Libya (2011) will provide analysis for contemporary proxy force operations from which to make an assessment of proxy force utility.

This monograph will conclude with a number of observations for future action. This includes that the utility and employment of proxy forces is not well understood outside Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. However in order to best utilize proxy force, capabilities doctrine needs to provide direction for mainstream, joint, and component planners. Working with proxy forces can bring significant risk, particularly in the strategic arena. Measures can however be put in place to mitigate these risks. These can include a whole of government approach to engaging not only with the proxy force but also political and civil leaderships within the organization. Despite mitigation however, proxy operations carry considerable risk, particularly during conflict termination. While this will invariably be the case, political expediency or rapidly evolving crisis may make proxy force operations the only viable option with which to pursue coalition goals.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGF – Anti Gadaffi Forces

AQ – Al-Qaeda

CENTCOM – Central Command

CJTF – Combined Joint Task Force

COED – Concise Oxford English Dictionary

COCOM – Combatant Command

DCDC – Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre

FID – Foreign Internal Defense

GWOT – Global War On Terror

IDAD – Internal Defense and Development

IW – Irregular Warfare

JDN – Joint Doctrine Note

JDP – Joint Doctrine Publication

JFC – Joint Force Commander

JP – Joint Publication

JSOTF – Joint Special Operations Task Force

JSOU – Joint Special Operations University

KLA – Kosovo Liberation Army

MANPADS – Man-Portable Air-Defense System

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSS – National Security Strategy

NTC – National Transitional Council

OBL – Osama Bin Laden

ODA – Operational Detachment Alpha
ODC – Operational Detachment Charlie
PGF – Pro Gadaffi Forces
PMC – Private Military Company
PSYOPS – Psychological Operations
R2P – Responsibility 2 Protect
SFA – Security Force Assistance
SFG – Special Forces Group
SOCCENT – Special Operations Command Center
UAE – United Arab Emirates
UN – United Nations
UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution
USSR – Union of Socialist Republics
UW – Unconventional Warfare

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INTRODUCTION

The use of proxy forces is almost as old as warfare itself and there are numerous examples throughout history of governments and militaries conducting warfare through a proxy force in order to defeat an opposing force or regime.¹

During the Cold War era the superpowers, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), conducted war through adopting proxies in numerous, post-colonial conflicts in Asia, South America, and Africa. The aim of this activity was to limit the sphere of influence of the opposing superpower's ideology rather than to defeat each other in open conflict. In the nuclear era, proxy wars were seen as a less high-risk means of pursuing national foreign policy objectives. While the conduct of proxy wars during this period provide many lessons for future study, this monograph will focus on the utility of proxy forces as an integral part of coalition operations against a state or non-state actor and not against another proxy force.²

This monograph will argue the proxy force operations are not well understood outside Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. This is a critical weakness in conventional force doctrine. Future conflicts are likely to be fought by combined coalitions of the willing. If used, proxy forces must be integrated into joint operations. As such, joint and component planning staff must have a good understanding of proxy force operations to ensure effective synchronization of effects to maximize the capabilities of proxy forces. All officers need to be educated to better understand the wider issues resulting from the employment of proxy forces. This will result in better advice to political leaders in their use and optimizing the effectiveness of their employment.

¹The *Arthashastra*, a treatise on statecraft written in India during the 4th century BC, is the source of the phrase 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. Kautliya, *Arthashastra*, Book IV, 'The Sources of Sovereign States', Chapter II, 'Concerning Peace and Exertion,' online at <http://www.mssu.edu/project-southasia/history/primarydocs/Arthashastra/BookVI.htm>.

²Coalition is not defined in US doctrine, NATO and UK doctrine define Coalition as an *ad-hoc* arrangement between two or more nations for common action. UK Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01.1.

In the post-Cold War era, intra-state conflict has flourished as the traditional superpowers' spheres of influence have receded with many post-World War II states disintegrating in the USSR's wake. The rise of religious extremism in the post-Cold War era has led to ten years of conflict under the umbrella of the "Global War on Terror."³ It is clear that the world has become a far more complex security environment, which will demand innovative approaches to future security challenges. Coalitions of the willing, whether under the auspices of the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and other international organizations, have also played an important role in dealing with such crises. The use of a proxy force by a single state sponsor will be a relatively straightforward relationship. Operating with proxy forces within a coalition will bring added complexity, and it is within these most demanding circumstances that this monograph will examine the use of proxy forces. While the United States will almost always have the capacity to tackle crisis independently and politically, a coalition operation will always be preferable, as seen in Afghanistan. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) planners also believed that success in the Afghanistan campaign rested on the coalescing international coalition. While the US military was exceptionally strong, the planners understood that the military forces of allies could contribute unique capabilities and would bolster the effect of the coalition on the world stage.⁴ In a number of campaigns, proxy forces have been employed as a means of minimizing coalition footprints on foreign soil or as an expedience for generating effects more rapidly than would be possible with the prolonged timelines of deploying a coalition land component.

³"War on Terror" which developed into the Global War on Terror (GWOT) was a term first used by President Bush in his address to Congress on 20 September 2001 in his response to the 9/11 bombing.

⁴Donald P. Wright, et al., *A Different Kind of War—The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) October 2001-September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2010), 49.

When considering the major conflicts of the post 9/11 era that have been prosecuted by western powers; all three, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya have had a proxy force element to the campaign. It would seem likely that western powers will continue to utilize such forces in future conflict. It could also be argued that in the post-Iraq and Afghan conflicts, western nations will be more reluctant to put their own forces, “boots on the ground,” for fear of entering protracted engagements once more. The UK’s Development, Concepts and Doctrine Center (DCDC) Strategic Trends Programme *Global Strategic Trend—Out to 2040* (4th Edition) identified a number of relevant trends. These include that most affluent societies, when confronted with few direct territorial threats and ageing populations, are likely to minimize defense expenditure by: investing in conflict prevention; burden-sharing through participation in alliances; and contracting out security. Interstate rivalries are likely to be expressed through proxies that have linked our complimentary objectives.⁵ In the light of the prevalence of the use of proxy forces it would seem appropriate that all elements of western countries armed forces should have a comprehensive understanding of proxy force operations in order to best utilize their capabilities. Whether it is the joint planning staff, land, air, or maritime components, all elements of a coalition must better understand the nature of proxy forces. Previously considered, the preserve of SOF and conventional land forces, while not deploying as a full land component, may still need to deploy elements to coordinate the synchronization of proxy forces with the rest of a coalition force.

In answering the question posed, this monograph will examine current military doctrine for proxy force operations to establish what direction and guidance is given to forces to prepare for such current operations. In identifying the important themes within this area of conflict, the historical context of proxy force operations should also be examined to provide a broader understanding of proxies and their utility. In order to identify how proxy forces have been

⁵Development Concepts and Doctrine Center, Strategic trends Programme, *Global Strategic Trends out to 2040* 4th Edition. 80.

employed in recent campaigns their use in both Afghanistan (2001/2002) and in Libya (2011) will be examined.

Research suggests that the use of proxy forces can offer a number of potential benefits to future operations. Proxy forces may enable a more rapid response to a crisis where it may take months to mobilize and deploy a conventional land component force. The resulting discrete nature of friendly force operations in support of a proxy is of clear benefit for the sponsoring nation or coalition. The deployment of conventional forces, in a Land Component comprised of foreign forces, can be controversial and indeed potentially costly in casualties and financial expenditure. If the proxy force is indigenous to the state in which they are operating, then they will be uniquely qualified to conduct operations in that environment. The use of a proxy force could also be seen as having greater legitimacy than the deployment of a foreign military force. Presently, proxy forces can also be seen as an attractive alternative to achieving strategic goals when a campaign is not widely supported by the sponsoring nation or coalitions' domestic constituency.

There can be clear benefits in the use of a proxy forces, but there are also considerable risks associated with proxy force operations. These risks will need to be carefully managed and mitigated to ensure a successful outcome. Unity of effort between the proxy and sponsoring nation or coalition will always be a challenge, particularly as a campaign progresses to a conflict termination phase. This will be a constantly changing and dynamic situation which will need to be carefully managed to deter the proxy force breaking away from agreed strategies.

With potentially greater emphasis on coalition operations in the future, this issue can only become more complex. Due to the contentious nature of operating through a proxy force, establishing consensus within a coalition on an agreed strategy will be challenging. Issues of interoperability can also have significant impact on coalitions of conventional forces; these issues will be significantly magnified when operating through a potentially irregular proxy force.

Innovative thinking and doctrine will be required to assist sponsor states in developing successful strategies to deal with these risks and challenges. Military leaders must have a comprehensive understanding of their risks and challenges in order to carefully advise their political leaderships on the implications of a proxy force relationship.

Arguably, the greatest challenge of working with a proxy is that of conflict termination. The ability of the sponsor states to influence the proxy and guide the proxy through this phase of a campaign will be critical to the overall successful conclusion of the campaign, particularly in the eyes of the international community. Legitimacy of the proxy force may evaporate if they do not adhere to the norms of international law and the law of armed conflict. The above factors must all be considered when analyzing whether it is appropriate to use proxy forces.

For the purpose of this monograph the key terms used in examining proxy force operations can be defined as follows.

Proxy

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COED) defines a proxy as (1) the authorization given to a substitute or deputy; (2) a person authorized to act as a substitute.⁶ In his recent work of proxy forces, Dr. Geraint Hughes of Kings College, London, defines a proxy as “a non-state paramilitary group receiving direct assistance from an external power.” Dr. Hughes draws a distinction between “proxies” and “surrogates,” which he argues, can be civilians and irregular military formations who are employed by a state’s security forces as part of an internal conflict.⁷ Proxy forces can range from militias and insurgent groups to Private Military Companies (PMCs) or even terrorist organizations. For the purpose of this monograph, the author will examine the

⁶Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COED), <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/proxy?=&proxy>. [accessed November 15, 2012].

⁷Dr. Geraint Hughes, *My Enemy's Enemy—Proxy Warfare in International Politics* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2012), 11.

use of paramilitary forces as a proxy. This assertion is based on the need for Western coalitions to use proxies that have elements of legitimacy and therefore allowing an overt relationship to develop. While this does not preclude the use of other types of proxy force in pursuit of national aims, it is unlikely that they would be suitable to fulfill the role of a proxy land component in a broader coalition campaign.

Sponsor

The COED defines a sponsor as, “A person who approves of and encourages someone or something (typically a public figure, a movement or party, or a policy.”⁸ For the purpose of this monograph, a sponsor refers to an individual state or group of states within a coalition that provide direct support to a proxy force or organization.

Surrogate

Surrogate has also been used to define the relationship between the sponsor and the proxy. The COED defines a surrogate as, “A substitute, especially a person deputizing for another in a specific role or office.”⁹ Acknowledging Dr. Hughes’ different categorization of a surrogate above, most US studies seem to use the term surrogate for a proxy/sponsor relationship. From the author’s studies these terms would seem to be interchangeable and therefore the author will use the term proxy exclusively.

CURRENT DOCTRINE

Overview

Current US doctrine for proxy warfare is largely contained within the area of Unconventional Warfare, a subset of Irregular Warfare in US Joint Doctrine and therefore is seen

⁸COED. [accessed November 15, 2012]

⁹Ibid.

as the purvey of Special Operations Forces.¹⁰ NATO currently has no published doctrine for proxy force operations, although the United Kingdom has recently published a Joint Doctrine Note providing guidance in engaging with them. It is important to understand however that the concept of proxy force operations is not integrated within wider doctrine to assist strategic and operational planners. The lack of published conventional doctrine for proxy force operations may, in large part, be due to the sometimes controversial and often covert nature of proxy operations. Not all Western nations feel comfortable with the concept of such relationships, particularly in a coalition setting. It is therefore not surprising that this translates into a lack of consensus on this area of warfare.

United States Doctrine

US Joint Doctrine, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations*, identify Unconventional Warfare (UW) as sitting within Special Operations Forces Core Operations.¹¹ JP 3-05 defines UW as “activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, or disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area.” JP 3-05 also states that “the United States may engage in UW across the spectrum of armed conflict from major campaigns to

¹⁰Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012). JP 1-02 defines UW as—Activities conducted to enable a resistance movement or insurgency to coerce, disrupt, or overthrow a government or occupying power by operating through or with an underground, auxiliary, and guerrilla force in a denied area. JP 1-02 defines IW as—A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will.

¹¹Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011).

limited contingency operations.”¹² Significantly, JP 3-05 uses Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan as an example of an UW operation.

JP 3-05 goes on to identify a number of factors that must be considered before engaging in an UW Operation. These include:

Military leaders must conduct a cost benefit analysis of the situation prior to making a recommendation to conduct an UW campaign. If properly coordinated and executed UW can help to set the conditions for crisis resolution on favorable grounds.

UW can have a strategic military-political utility that may alter the balance of power between sovereign states, which can lead to significant political risk both domestically and internationally. The nature of UW, working with paramilitaries and inter-organizational partners means that Operational Security will be paramount.

Joint Force Commander (JFC) will typically task SOF with UW operations and require supporting relationships with some interagency partners and some service components. The JFC Staff must be able to conduct and support UW operations simultaneously with both conventional and Irregular Warfare (IW).¹³

US forces will generally conduct an UW Campaign through the following phases:

Preparation.

Initial Contact.

Infiltration.

Organization.

Build-up.

¹²Ibid., II-9.

¹³US Joint Doctrine defines Irregular Warfare as including; insurgency and counterinsurgency, terrorism and counterterrorism, stability operations, unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, information operations, psychological operations, intelligence and counterintelligence and civil-military operations.

Employment.

Transition.

These phases may not all be required, depending on the operation, and may not be executed sequentially.

Finally, senior civilian and military leaders should understand that UW operations will take time to mature and reach maximum effectiveness. This will be particularly true of operations where proxy forces lack training and organization.¹⁴

It is also important to understand the relationship between UW and the other SOF Core Operations/Activities particularly Foreign Internal Defense (FID). The FID is defined in JP 3-05 as “US activities that support a Host Nation’s Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategy designed to protect against subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, terrorism and other threats to their security, stability and legitimacy.”¹⁵ A similar mission set of Security Sector Reform (SSR) seeks to “support the reform, restructuring, or reestablishment of the armed forces and defense sector, which is accomplished through Security Force Assistance (SFA).”¹⁶ Army SOF doctrine differentiates between Core Operations and Core Activities, putting FID into the former and SFA into the later (Figure 1).¹⁷

¹⁴JP 3-05, II-10.

¹⁵Ibid., II-11.

¹⁶Ibid., II-12.

¹⁷Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012).

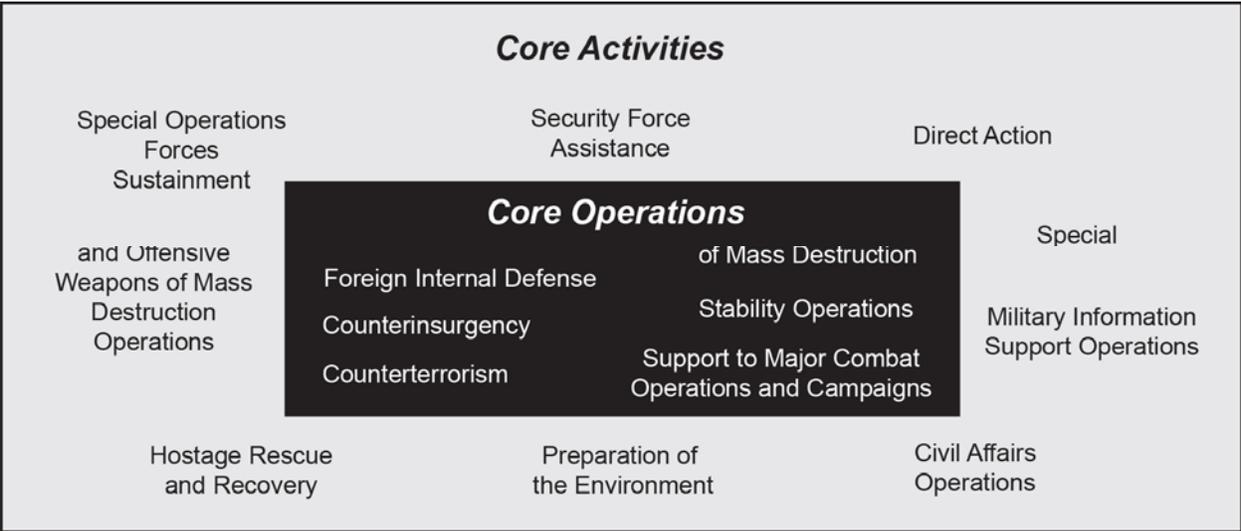


Figure 1. Special Operations Core Operations and Activities
 Source: ADRP 3-05, *Special Operations*

On first inspection, the aims of FID would seem to be diametrically opposed to that of UW. However, many of the skills and capabilities required for FID are the same as those required for UW and vice versa. This will include cultural and religious understanding, language, and training skills. The FID is also largely conducted by small teams, in an expeditionary context, much like sponsor forces supporting proxy forces. Arguably, engagement in FID activity will benefit a state’s ability to conduct UW due to the applicability of skills sets required for both. David S. Maxwell goes further; writing in the *Small Wars Journal*, he points out, “It is imperative that Special Forces continue to train to develop and assist underground organizations because the same techniques (*unconventional warfare related activity*) have application in Foreign Internal Defense, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.”¹⁸ Conducting FID missions within

¹⁸David S. Maxwell, “Why Does Special Forces Train and Educate for Unconventional Warfare?” *Small Wars Journal* (April 2010): 4.

regions of the world that are inherently unstable, provides opportunities for access to proxy forces in the region and potential basing options to train proxy forces. The FID missions will also provide states with in-region situation awareness, to better understand the region and to receive a better understanding of the capabilities and motivations of potential proxy groupings for future engagement.

Importantly, US doctrine emphasizes UW as being the preserve of SOF, recognizing that support may be required from other services.¹⁹ US doctrine also recognizes that FID and SFA are missions conducted by both SOF and conventional forces.²⁰ With future US force structures being regionally aligned under the geographic Combatant Commands (COCOMs), there may increasingly be opportunities for US conventional forces to play a role in UW. This would allow a wider range of capabilities to be brought to bear in a proxy force campaign.

United Kingdom Doctrine

The UK recently published a Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) on Proxy Forces entitled *Intervention: Relationships With Paramilitary Groups*.²¹ This publication is classified Restricted which perhaps indicates the sensitive nature of the employment of proxy forces. A detailed analysis of this document is not therefore possible in an academic paper. What can be said is that this has been produced in response to an identified UK Doctrine Gap and as a result of experiences of UK forces during the Libya Conflict.²² Previous UK doctrine publications have explored longer-term relationships, which were codified in JDN 6/11 *Partnering Indigenous*

¹⁹JP 3-05, II-10.

²⁰Ibid., II-11-12.

²¹Ministry of Defence. Joint Doctrine Note 4/12, *Intervention: Relationships With Paramilitary Groups* (The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, 2012).

²²Ibid.

Forces.²³ JDN 6/11 defines a partnership relationship as, “in a security context, a formal relationship based on a sound legal arrangement, trust and mutual respect, where the partners are otherwise independent bodies who agree to cooperate and share risks to achieve common goals that are mutually beneficial.” There are many similarities in this definition with that of a proxy relationship. The key difference is that a partnership should be a collaborative effort, working to the same goals, whereas in a proxy relationship the proxy and sponsor may be working for each other but do not necessarily have the same goals.

Wider UK doctrine provides guidance for the development of alliances and coalitions. Joint Doctrine Publication 5-00, *Campaign Planning* provides guidance on multinational crisis management and the development of various types of multinational coalitions.²⁴ This guidance is however focused on a variety of relationships with established allies rather than non-state actors.

NATO Doctrine

Similarly NATO Doctrine focuses on the importance of managing multinational relationships within a NATO Alliance or coalition construct.²⁵ With the exception therefore of the UK’s JDN *Intervention: Relationships With Paramilitary Groups* both UK and NATO doctrine fail to fully integrate an understanding of proxy force operations within broader joint and single service doctrine. Given the sensitive nature of proxy operations it is perhaps not surprising that NATO has not identified and gained a consensus on developing formal doctrine in this area.

²³Ministry of Defence, Joint Doctrine Note 6/11, *Partnering Indigenous Forces* (The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, 2011).

²⁴Ministry of Defence, Joint Doctrine Publication 5-00, *Campaign Planning*, 2nd ed. (The Development, Concepts, and Doctrine, 2008), 3-9-17. Also Ministry of Defence, Joint Doctrine Publication 3-00, *Campaign Execution* (The Development, Concepts, and Doctrine, 2009); and Ministry of Defence, Joint Doctrine Publication 01, *Campaigning*, 2nd ed. (The Development, Concepts, and Doctrine, 2008).

²⁵Ministry of Defence, Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-01(D), *Allied Joint Doctrine* (Allied Joint Publications), 5-3-4 and Ministry of Defence, Allied Joint Doctrine (AJP) 3(A), *Allied Doctrine Joint Operations* (NATO Standardization Agency, 2002).

Analysis of Current Doctrine

The potential frequency of proxy force operations, either as a campaign tool of choice or more likely, as will be seen from this paper's case studies, a measure of necessity is likely to increase. It would therefore seem appropriate that some form of consensus should be reached within the construct of the NATO Alliance on the use of proxy forces. This may however be overly ambitious. Experience has shown that even within the context of NATO operations there will be differences in opinion on both the legitimacy and the conduct of conventional NATO operations. As will be seen in the Libya case study, it may be left to a coalition of the willing within the NATO Alliance, to press ahead with combat operations.²⁶ Within this grouping the appetite to conduct proxy force operations may be further reduced to a smaller number of participating states. The investment of considerable capital, both politically and militarily will be required by these states in pursuing all available means, including proxy force operations to resolve a conflict. The issue of consensus within the NATO Alliance for such operations is a difficult one and will change from operation to operation. However, Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR in Libya may be an example of an operation where broad consensus was reached to initiate the operation and forward leaning nations then pushed the boundaries of this agreed consensus to achieve their aims. If however, there is a requirement for full, but tightly confined consensus across the alliance, perhaps to ensure the wider legitimacy of the operation, then proxy activity may need to be strictly controlled as a result. An agreed framework for proxy operations would help to more clearly control the engagement with a proxy and build confidence among participating coalition states.

²⁶Flanagan, Stephen, "Libya: Managing a Fragile Coalition," *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (24 March 2011): 1-4.

Current consensus suggests that conflict prevention is emerging as a key feature of future foreign policy and security engagements. In light of developing Western nations' security policy and doctrine for what has been termed "up-stream engagement," nations will increasingly have national and alliance interests invested in regions of instability.²⁷ Early engagement to prevent costly interventions in full-blown conflicts is a logical argument for preemptive engagement. However, governments may be at some risk of mission creep developing into involvement in conflicts through support to proxy forces. Such operations and campaigns may not be discretionary, with increased engagement being one factor that could lead to a moral imperative to intervene Responsibility to Protect (R2P).²⁸ In such situations, a proxy force maybe employed through the necessity of speed of action or through issues of legitimacy and/or lack of domestic support for the commitment of national ground forces. Within this context it would appear appropriate that more comprehensive doctrine should be developed to ensure that effective use is made of proxy forces as part of a wider coalition operation, while recognizing and where possible mitigating the risks inherent in the proxy/sponsor relationship.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PROXY FORCES

It has already been shown that proxy warfare, in many forms, has a long history. Academic study of the subject however has been limited. The great theorists of strategy, Niccolo Machiavelli and Carl von Clausewitz, both refer to the use of proxies within their work but do not necessarily expand their analysis. Machiavelli noted that "once the people have taken up arms

²⁷The term 'up-stream engagement' is taken to mean the early engagement with governments in regions of instability to strengthen and develop existing systems of government and security forces. Such early engagement is aimed at preempting the development of crisis and conflict.

²⁸R2P was unanimously adopted by UN member states at the 2005 World Summit. R2P directs that states have a responsibility to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity; that international society has a duty to assist states to fulfill their R2P. If states failed to meet their responsibilities then international society should take 'timely and decisive' action to protect that population.

[against their prince] they will never lack for outside help.”²⁹ Clausewitz draws his reader’s attention to the activities of the Spanish and Portuguese, supported by Wellington in the Peninsular Campaigns.³⁰ Following World War I, T. E. Lawrence’s, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, records his experiences in shaping the Arab Revolt during World War I.³¹ Lawrence provides the first detailed study of the use of proxy forces in the industrial age. Lawrence’s in-depth knowledge of the Arabs enabled him to develop his theory of proxy warfare. Lawrence used his knowledge of the Arab culture of tribal and clan allegiances to influence Arab leaders to support his concept of operations. Lawrence identified the strengths and weaknesses of both the Arab forces and Turkish enemy to devise his strategy. Using the highly mobile, but lightly armed, Arab forces he conducted hit and run attacks on the Turkish lines of communication. Lawrence ensured that the Arab forces never conducted direct attacks on Turkish forces without significant preparation, support, and the element of surprise. His activities ensured that large numbers of Turkish forces were fixed in protecting their lines of communications, while ensuring sufficient supplies reached the Turks to prevent them from withdrawing their forces from the Arabian Peninsula. Arab forces were supported with training, limited heavy weapons, and air support when required. Importantly, General Allenby’s Egyptian Expeditionary Force was still required to engage the Turkish forces in decisive combat. While the Arab revolt provides a valuable insight into successful use of a proxy force, the presence of a substantial allied land component means that there are better examples available to study in the context of this monograph’s specific question.³²

²⁹Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Book III (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 119.

³⁰Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Book IV (Princeton: University Press, 1984), Chapter 26, 483.

³¹T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 672.

³²For more analysis of Lawrence’s approach to proxy warfare see T. E. Lawrence, “The Evolution of a Revolt,” *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* (October 1920): 22. Major Lawrence W. Moores, “T. E. Lawrence: Theorist and Campaign Planner” (SAMS Monograph, Command and General Staff College

In the post-Cold War era, the United States-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq provide examples of proxy force operations that are relevant to this monograph. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan saw a coalition of Special Operations Forces (SOF) deploy to support the Northern Alliance forces as a proxy to defeat the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces. In Iraq, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM utilized SOF to support Kurdish militia to conduct operations against Iraqi forces in Northern Iraq thus fixing Iraq forces and preventing a move south to attack advancing coalition forces.³³

These operations gave rise to a renewed interest in proxy force operations. The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) published a collection of studies under the title *Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches*.³⁴ The JSOU studies within this report refer to proxy forces as surrogate forces. While the general context of the two terms is the same, it would appear that the term proxy forces is not used, as it is deemed to have a less positive connotation, being linked to the proxy wars of the Cold War era. The fact that language, such as ‘surrogate’ is used, may also be an indication of the sensitivity that such operations might have when employed by Western democracies.

Most recently Dr. Geraint Hughes of the Defense Studies Department, King’s College, London, has published *My Enemy’s Enemy*, which provides the most comprehensive study of proxy warfare in a contemporary context.³⁵ *My Enemy’s Enemy* focuses on proxy warfare as a military/paramilitary element of covert action but recognizes that in some cases overt support to a

1992), 55, and Basil Aboul-Enein and Youssef & Aboul-Enein, “A Theoretical Exploration of Lawrence of Arabia’s Inner Meanings of Guerrilla Warfare.” *Small Wars Journal* (July 2011): 10.

³³Isaac J. Peltier, “Surrogate Warfare: The Role of U.S. Army Special Forces” (Master’s thesis, Command and General Staff College, 2005). For analysis of US Operations with Kurdish proxy forces in Iraq.

³⁴Travis L. Homiak, Kelly H. Smith, Isaac J. Peltier, D. Jonathon White and Richard D. Newton, *Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches*, JSOU Report 09-3, Joint Special Forces University (Hurburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2009), 93.

³⁵Hughes, 217.

proxy may be preferable for reasons of transparency and legitimacy. Dr. Hughes takes a broad view of proxy forces to include terrorists, insurgents, militias and other formations.

Academics Overview

Dr. Hughes argues that there is a gap in conceptual understanding in the environments and factors, which lead to proxy warfare and the potential implications, which can result for both the proxy and sponsor.³⁶ In *Expanding the American Way of War: Working “Through, With, or By” Non-U.S. Actors*, Travis L. Homiak analyses what is meant by “Through, With or By” as a well established SOF doctrine for operating with proxy forces and its place in UW doctrine.³⁷ Homiak suggests that the US proclivity for adopting the direct approach rather than the indirect approach (in using UW as a primary means of waging war) can be seen as counter-productive, and a change in mindset is required to best utilize proxy forces in the indirect approach more frequently.³⁸

Kelly Smith puts forward his views in *Surrogate Warfare in the 21st Century*.³⁹ Writing in 2009, Smith argues that there is a doctrine gap in US Joint Doctrine in regard to proxy forces. Currently surrogate warfare is seen as a subset of UW in the use of indigenous or surrogate forces.⁴⁰ Smith suggests that a new definition for a surrogate should be developed which is more inclusive: “A surrogate is an entity outside of the Department of Defense (i.e., indigenous to the location of the conflict, from a third country, partner nation, alliance, or from another U.S. organization) that performs specific functions that assist in the accomplishment of U.S. military

³⁶Ibid., 5.

³⁷Homiak, et.al., *Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches*, JSOU Report 09-3, Joint Special Forces University (Hurlburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2009), 27.

³⁸Ibid., 32.

³⁹Kelly H. Smith, *Surrogate Warfare in the 21st Century in Contemporary Security Challenges: Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches*, JSOU Report 09-3, Joint Special Forces University (Hurlburt Field, FL: The JSOU Press, 2009), 93.

⁴⁰Ibid., 41.

objectives by taking the place of capabilities that the U.S. military either does not have or does not desire to employ.”⁴¹ This would seem to be an overly expansive definition in that partnership and alliances constitute relationships of mutual benefit and represent membership of a coalition or alliance.

In his Naval War College Thesis, Major Alan Day examines the implications of Surrogate/Proxy warfare.⁴² Day points out that current Joint US doctrine only characterizes relationships with other forces in terms of alliances or coalitions.⁴³ Day demonstrates that the relationship between NATO Allies during Operation ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo was very different to their relationship with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) during this campaign.⁴⁴ It could be argued that the use of the KLA as a proxy does not fit the thesis of this monograph, as NATO were eventually forced to deploy a Land Component to remove Serbian forces from Kosovo. The KLA, working with NATO SOF, did provide a significant contribution to the campaign prior to the deployment of a Land Component.⁴⁵

Rationale for the Employment of Proxy Forces

Dr. Hughes identifies three strategic rationales behind the use of proxy forces by a sponsor. The first rationale is using a strategy of *coercion*, essentially influencing the opponent to stop ongoing actions or adopt a new course of action through the use of a proxy force. The second rationale is that of *disruption*, that is supporting a proxy within a target state to draw resources away from the direct confrontation between the target state and the sponsor state. Finally

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Allan E Day, “Implications of Surrogate Warfare” (Master’s thesis, Naval War College, 2002).

⁴³Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2011).

⁴⁴Day, 3.

⁴⁵Ibid., 7.

transformative objectives can be seen as a rationale for a sponsor state.⁴⁶ This requires the use of separatist movements as a proxy force with the aim of breaking up the target state into new states. While all three rationales would seem to have utility within the context of this thesis, *coercion* and *disruption* would seem to be the most relevant concepts. In order to coerce a state into following an international mandate or comply with a coalition's aims, then the use of a proxy force with limited aims, would seem to provide a proportional and effective means of bringing pressure to bear on a target state. In order to defeat a target state, disruption through the use of a proxy force, may be an appropriate option for a coalition. It should be noted however that the use of a proxy force, combined with an air and maritime components, may not provide sufficient threat to the target state to defeat it. Kosovo is a case in point where tacit support for the KLA was not sufficient to achieve a Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo and a land component was required.

Advantages of Employing Proxy Forces

Day outlines the advantages of using a proxy force; a quick response capability, and a small coalition footprint. Often proxy forces are more uniquely qualified to conduct operations and with greater legitimacy than a coalition force. Importantly, Day focuses on the "convenient contract" aspect of the relationship of proxy and sponsor. He argues that the arrangement can be temporary or maintained for the longer term.⁴⁷ Again using the KLA as an example he demonstrates that the relationship between proxy and sponsor was a marriage of convenience for the US. Following the removal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, the US supported UN Resolution

⁴⁶Hughes, 20-21.

⁴⁷Day, 7.

1244 which called on the KLA to disarm, because it had become a potential destabilizing force in the region.⁴⁸

Legitimacy

The issue of legitimacy would seem to be a vital aspect of proxy operations within the context of an overt campaign, as considered in this monograph. Dr. Jonathan White has examined the aspects of legitimacy when operating with a proxy force.⁴⁹ White's study examines the implications of legitimacy in proxy warfare for both the proxy and the sponsor. White uses earlier classifications by Dr. Larry Cable who suggests that legitimacy is "the generally conceded right to exercise authority."⁵⁰ Cable maintained that there were two broad types of legitimacy; existential and functional. Existential legitimacy deals with how a regime comes to power. Functional legitimacy deals with how the regime exercises its power and how it works for its people in order to gain legitimacy from the people.⁵¹ White argues, while a regime may achieve existential legitimacy to gain power, it does not always follow that the regime achieves functional legitimacy. If a regime or opposition requires the support of an external supporter then this can potentially reduce that entities' existential legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The relationship between a proxy and its sponsor is therefore sensitive and can have wide-ranging ramifications if seen to be out of balance in favor of one element of the relationship. The significance of this balance is just as important for the sponsor who, through support of a proxy, can gain functional legitimacy both in the eyes of the population in the crisis area, the supporter's own domestic population, as well as the international community. White argues that a supporter gains

⁴⁸Ibid., 8.

⁴⁹Dr. Jonathan White, *Legitimacy and Surrogate Warfare, in Irregular Warfare and Indirect Approaches*, JSOU Report 09-3, Joint Special Forces University (Hurburt Field, Florida: The JSOU Press, 2009), 85.

⁵⁰Cable lecture, "Intervention Operations," CGSC C520 lecture, February 1997.

⁵¹White, 86.

considerable value from a proxy force in terms of cultural knowledge and language skills when developing a support base among the proxy's own population. This enables a reduction in footprint of sponsor forces and thus increases the functional legitimacy of the proxy force while demonstrating the sponsor's commitment to a proxy force lead. These elements of the relationship benefit both groups in maintaining their legitimacy.⁵² The establishment and maintenance of legitimacy within the context of coalition operations is therefore vital to a successful relationship between proxy and sponsor.

Conditions for a Proxy Sponsor Relationship

Homiak argues that there are a number of conditions that need to be present for a successful relationship to develop between proxy and sponsor. These three conditions include; knowledge of each other's existence, belief that the exchange will bring about an advantageous result, and that each are willing to enter into the relationship.⁵³ He goes on to argue that, while the actors should be rational and understand the other actor's rationale, although desirable, is not required to achieve a mutually beneficial exchange. Homiak identifies trust as vital to the arrangement, even when trust is challenging to achieve across cultural divides and between actors with potentially conflicting interests. Homiak points out that pre-existing relationships, interpersonal skills, and cultural awareness will all help to build trust between actors.⁵⁴ Homiak argues that investment in proxy forces within the operational context during Phase 0--Shaping and Phase 1--Deterring operations will provide considerable advantages.⁵⁵ He argues that early engagement with a proxy force can shape the environment and also have a deterrent effect that

⁵²Ibid., 89.

⁵³Homiak, 24.

⁵⁴Ibid., 25.

⁵⁵JP 3-0, V7-9, for full explanation of Phases of a campaign.

can minimize the direct military effort required in subsequent operations.⁵⁶ Homiak's observations of the conditions required for a successful engagement are sound. His requirement for early engagement with a proxy force will, while highly desirable, not always be possible as will be seen in this paper's case studies.

Dr. Hughes identifies three important conditions that should be met for a proxy-sponsor relationship to exist.⁵⁷

1. There must be a direct relationship of assistance between the sponsor state and the proxy. This may include funding, training, arming and equipping, and potentially providing the sponsor's territory as a safe haven.

2. Both sponsor and proxy must have a common enemy—the target state. Hughes argues that the target state does not necessarily have to be the same target as the proxy is engaging, i.e. another proxy force. Hughes cites Arab states' support for the PLO and Hezbollah in the Lebanese civil war as a means of targeting Israel. This type of relationship would seem to be more problematic in a coalition campaign context due to the political sensitivities of engaging in a proxy conflict, i.e. not a direct attack on the enemy.

3. The relationship between the sponsor and the proxy must be sustained over several months, if not years, rather than involving temporary cooperation. This could be seen as contradictory to Day's argument that the relationship can be either temporary or maintained.

The Risks of Engaging with Proxy Forces as a Sponsor

Day identifies that operating through a proxy force is both complex and entails considerable risk. He argues that removing a conventional land component of a Joint Force and replacing it with a proxy force, adds more complexity than working with a coalition and presents

⁵⁶Homiak, 27.

⁵⁷Hughes, 12.

significant challenges. These challenges are articulated as unity of effort, interoperability, and war termination. Establishing unity of command will be critical to any coalition commander.⁵⁸ Proxy grouping will often lack their own unity of command with multiple chains of command and systems of allegiances. Therefore, establishing common unity of command between proxy and sponsor can be problematic causing additional risk to the sponsors' involvement. Integrating the proxy into the coalitions planning will require joint staff to have detailed understanding of the cultural and social make up of the proxy force. Time may be required to develop effective relationships and negotiate proxy roles to be fulfilled in the campaign. Day also demonstrates the importance of effective liaison to establish the unity of effort between proxy and sponsor.⁵⁹ Engagement at the earliest opportunity is therefore key to the sponsor in establishing a viable relationship with a potential proxy.

The most difficult phase of a proxy sponsor relationship will be as war termination approaches. Day highlights Pudas' statement, "The closer a coalition is to victory, the more individual partners diverge from the common objectives to pursue their own aims."⁶⁰

Day argues that this effect will be even more pronounced in the proxy sponsor relationship. He highlights the different aims of NATO and the KLA in Kosovo. The KLA wanted full independence for Kosovo from Serbia, while NATO and the surrounding states did not wish to see a new Albanian ethnic state emerge.⁶¹ In the case of Afghanistan, coalition forces had to resort to providing Northern Alliance groups with weapons and supplies to maintain their pursuit of coalition war aims. Significantly, Day does not examine the potential dangers of proxy forces taking punitive measures against their enemy once defeated. The violation of human rights

⁵⁸Terry Pudas, "Preparing Future Coalition Commanders," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Winter 1994).

⁵⁹Day, 12.

⁶⁰Pudas, 41.

⁶¹Day, 14.

by proxy forces in the period of war termination must be a primary concern of any coalition in retaining the legitimacy of both the proxy and the sponsor.⁶² Similarly, criminality and corruption within a proxy force during conflict termination will impact on the legitimacy of proxy and sponsor. Illegal activity may be used by a proxy for generating income, especially once a sponsor has reduced or cut its support at the conclusion of a campaign.⁶³ Day argues that there can be a range of options to enable a coalition to control the war termination phase of an operation. One such option is for lead states in a coalition to retain unilateral control of elements of the force to ensure they can be used within the limits imposed by other members of the coalition. Day argues that in the closing phase of such operations, the US needs to retain full control of elements of the force to ensure it remains in control of situation.⁶⁴ This would seem to be a requirement that is just as important in terms of achieving national goals within a coalition as it is to maintaining control of a proxy force. The US has forces large enough to enable it to maintain its own national forces as well as contributing to a coalition. Other NATO partners, and particularly those likely to lead a coalition (UK and France), do not have the luxury of being able to maintain national as well as coalition force elements within a single operation.

Dr. Hughes assesses a number of risks that are inherent in proxy force operations. The importance and impact of not having sufficient indigenous support within the target state; lack of indigenous support will significantly reduce the proxy and sponsor's legitimacy, and potentially risk failure of the operation. The force must have a degree of tactical sophistication and technological expertise to be able to fully utilize the support offered. This will also apply to the levels of organization within the proxy force. An inability to organize and command the force

⁶²An example of this is the allegation that the Afghan Warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum murdered thousands of Taliban prisoners when Northern Afghanistan fell to the Northern Alliance.

⁶³Hughes, 50.

⁶⁴Day, 16.

effectively will result in an inability to fully utilize sponsor support, significantly increasing the risk of failure. The proxy force must also be structured robustly enough to prevent infiltration by the target state's intelligence forces. If they have been penetrated then this provides considerable risk for a sponsor state in terms of operational security, additionally if the relationship is clandestine then the risk of compromise of the proxy/sponsor relationship may have significant international ramifications.⁶⁵

Issues of the legality of a proxy/sponsor relationship will also need to be considered in developing a relationship with a proxy force. Despite recent developments in the concept of R2P Articles 2(4) and 2(7) of the UN Charter establish the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of another state.⁶⁶ Without a UNSCR to authorize intervention, a state or coalition's association with a proxy force could be deemed as a breach of the UN Charter by the international community. State responsibility may also be applied to the actions of a proxy force if it is established that the proxy is under direct control of the sponsor in the form of a JTF Commander. Commanders must therefore understand the level of control that they exert over a proxy in order to establish the level of potential liability. Legal issues therefore can have a significant impact on the nature of the relationship between proxy and sponsor. The level of both political and military risk through culpability for a proxy force's actions will need to be carefully considered.

Finally, the issue of long-term consequences of backing a proxy can have serious implications. During the 1980s, the United States and Saudi Arabia provided support for proxies in fighting Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, most notably Osama Bin Laden (OBL), but also Gulbuddin Hekmatyer and Jalaluddin Haqqani's factions. The unforeseen consequences of this were that OBL went on to launch attacks on the West through his Al Qaeda network and

⁶⁵Hughes, 32-33.

⁶⁶Anonymous, UN Charter, Chapter 1 Articles.

Hekmatyer and Jalauddin sided with the Taliban against NATO forces in Afghanistan.⁶⁷ The phenomena of “blowback,” as these long-term consequences have been termed, is of considerable concern and difficult to predict in the modern dynamic security environment.

This section has identified what doctrine is currently available to guide planning and execution of proxy force operations. In addition, the important issues that surround the engagement with and utilization of proxy force has also been examined. The next section will examine two contemporary case studies in the light of this analysis. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM Afghanistan 2001/2002 and Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR are relatively recent examples of proxy force operations. These are very different operations and demonstrate the broad spectrum in which the proxy/sponsor relationship can exist.

CONTEMPORARY STUDIES

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM—Afghanistan 2001/2002

In the aftermath of the 9/11 Al-Qaeda (AQ) attacks on the United States, the US government declared a ‘Global War on Terror’ (GWOT). The most immediate target in this campaign was to destroy the Al-Qaeda groupings that had planned and mounted the attacks from their safe-haven in Afghanistan. As early as 19 September 2001, lead elements of a joint CIA and SOF force were dispatched to engage with Northern Alliance groups to bring about the fall of the Taliban Government and destroy the AQ groupings within the country.⁶⁸ Within the geographic area of Central Command’s (CENTCOM) responsibility, there were no extant military plans for action in Afghanistan. Initial planning identified that a conventional force for the task would take months to assemble, but the aftermath of 9/11 made this not politically acceptable for domestic

⁶⁷Joanna Wright, “Taliban Insurgency Shows Signs of Enduring Strength,” *Journal of International Relations* 18/10 (2006): 24-31 and Tim Weiner “Blowback from the Afghan Battlefields,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1994.

⁶⁸Rod Paschall, “The 27-Day War,” *MHQ The Quarterly Journal of Military History* (Spring 2012): 54-65.

US audiences. Additionally the historical lessons of previous conventional force operations in Afghanistan suggested that the use of indigenous forces would be a better strategy.⁶⁹ CIA operatives had been active in Afghanistan since the US Embassy bombings in Africa during 1998, which meant that contacts were already developed with Northern Alliance leaders.

The SOF grouping, “Task Force Dagger,” was based on 5th Special Forces Group (SFG). Under US SOF doctrine at the time of the operation, SFGs generally deployed as standalone elements. The requirements of the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM mission required 5th SFG to become the basis for a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). The JSOTF-North, as it was titled, rapidly grew to include a comprehensive range of capabilities including Aviation, PSYOP, Civil Affairs and a broad spectrum of air assets with which to prosecute an UW campaign against the Taliban and AQ in Afghanistan.⁷⁰ The JSOTF-North rapidly established itself at an airbase in Uzbekistan and was deploying SF Detachments into Afghanistan within two weeks of arriving in Theater.⁷¹ JSOTF-North and US SOCCENT initial planning followed the seven phases of UW as their planning framework, with an initial timeline of conducting training and build-up of forces through the winter to enable a spring offensive. At this point, SOF UW operations were seen as shaping activity prior to a conventional force action. It was not envisaged that a closely coordinated air and UW campaign would be decisive. Air operations commenced on 7 October 2011 with a focused, two-week bombing campaign which targeted not only Taliban facilities, but also AQ targets as well.⁷²

⁶⁹Donald P. Wright, et al., 42.

⁷⁰Charles H. Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, James A. Schroder, and Kalev I. Sepp, *Weapon of Choice: Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003).

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Paschall, 59.

The Northern Alliance had been fighting the Pashtun dominated Taliban since their emergence in the early 1990s. Originally led by Ahmad Shah Massoud, who had also been a prominent Mujahideen leader against the Soviet invasion, Massoud had been assassinated shortly before the 9/11 attacks. Mohammed Fahim Khan had assumed the senior leadership position following Massoud's death, but he was one of a number of other warlords within the Northern Alliance. JSOTF-North and the CIA identified Khan and General Rashid Dostum as the key leaders that US forces would engage with. Both Afghan Commanders headed significant militia groupings and were selected for SOF to make initial contact with. The SOF Operational Detachments-Alpha (ODAs) used their Air Force Special Tactics Squadron teams to call in air strikes on Taliban positions as a demonstration to North Alliance leaders of US intent.⁷³ Initial assessments by the ODAs found the North Alliance leaders ready to start combat operations immediately. While this was not the plan that the JSOTF and US SOCCENT had put in place, air assets were available to commence operations and the ODAs were able to rapidly adapt to the developing situation. The ODAs split down into three man teams from the original 12-man team configuration to allow them to cover more ground and link-up with great numbers of North Alliance forces. This had a number of benefits in that there was increased coordination and synchronization, not just between the proxy forces and their coalition air support, but also between the dispersed Northern Alliance forces. This resulted in increased tempo of activity and the reduction in risk of friendly fire incidents. In addition to air support, money, weapons, and supplies were also delivered with the assistance of the CIA.⁷⁴

The town of Mazar-e-Sharif in Northern Afghanistan was identified as the initial target for proxy force operations. Not only was it of huge cultural, religious, and economic value to the Northern Alliance, but it also had an airfield that could act as an in-country Forward Mounting

⁷³Sepp Kalev I, "Meeting the 'G-Chief': ODA 595," *Special Warfare* (September 2002).

⁷⁴ Charles H. Briscoe, Richard L. Kiper, James A. Schroder, and Kalev I. Sepp.

Base (FMB) from which to coordinate the inflow of further forces and future offensive operations. In preparation for the attack ‘Task Force Dagger’ deployed ODC 53 to coordinate operation.⁷⁵ The plan entailed Northern Alliance forces converging on the town from the south, with a direct attack made following a linkup of forces. ODA elements would provide air support to the attack. Some elements of the Taliban force switched sides but others, most notably the AQ affiliated fighters fought hard. These forces remained in concentrated groupings making them more vulnerable to air strikes and finally congregated at the Tangoi Gap the last defensible site south of the city. The final coordinated attack using Northern Alliance on foot, horses and vehicles, supported by air, routed the Taliban and the city of Mazar-e-Sharif was liberated on 10 November 2001.

Similar support was provided for Northern Alliance units on the central front in the Bagram area north of Kabul and in the area of Konduz on the northern front. On 11 November 2001 Northern Alliance forces began their advance on Kabul, preceded by a heavy and coordinated bombing campaign on the Kabul front. In a steady advance, General Bismullah Khan’s forces routed the Taliban and entered Kabul on the 14 November. In just 27 days a joint CIA and SOF UW operation had dislodged the Taliban regime. Some \$18 million in operational funds had been paid to Northern Alliance forces and over 100 air sorties flown each day.⁷⁶

This is the experience, which has come to be known as the “Afghan model” for UW, which demonstrated the utility of air, aviation, SOF, and CIA in conducting a highly successful operation. If however, a study of the whole of the campaign is conducted, then the operations to destroy AQ and kill or capture OBL in the Tora Bora Mountains of Eastern Afghanistan can be seen as a far less successful use of proxy forces. Peter Krause sums up the failure thus, “The reliance on indigenous fighters, US Special Forces and airpower meant an estimated 1,000–1,500

⁷⁵ODC 53 was the SOF equivalent of a Battlegroup HQ and it arrived on the 2 November 2001.

⁷⁶Paschall, 59.

al Qaeda troops holed up in the region faced neither an effective frontal assault nor a well-positioned, reliable flanking force to prevent their escape.”⁷⁷

Following the fall of Kabul, US forces received intelligence suggesting the OBL was withdrawing southeast towards Jalalabad and the Eastern Mountain ranges.⁷⁸ Northern Alliance forces had effectively achieved their aim of defeating the Taliban and recapturing Kabul. Being predominantly Tajiks and Uzbeks, the Northern Alliance had no interest in pursuing AQ into the eastern mountains where the predominant tribes were Pashtuns. US forces were therefore forced into using Pashtun warlords such as Hazret Ali. The Pashtun forces were not as well-trained or experienced as Northern Alliance fighters, nor used to working with US SOF. This Eastern Alliance force was found to be unreliable and lacking in the same motivation as the Northern Alliance, and ethnic divisions within the Eastern Alliance caused additional tensions.⁷⁹ In the post-Taliban era many Pashtun Commanders were more interested in vying for future positions of power and influence to control their districts. While small CIA and SOF teams had achieved some success with air power in the Tora Bora area, it was not until 10 December that a 40-man JSOC unit deployed into the area. SOF troops deployed with the various Eastern Alliance forces and conducted up to 100 air strike sorties per-day. It was not until 17 December that Eastern Alliance forces moved in force to tackle the AQ force. The AQ fighters in the Tora Bora complex were die-hard, experienced fighters and by this point were inured to US bombing. The Eastern Alliance forces were simply no match for the task allotted them, making slow progress and failing to prevent OBL and many of his AQ fighters, from withdrawing to Pakistan. This, combined with

⁷⁷Peter John Paul Krause, “The Last Good Chance: A Reassessment of US Operations at Tora Bora,” *Security Studies* (2008): 644-684.

⁷⁸Charles H. Briscoe, et al., eds, *Weapon of Choice U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2003).

⁷⁹Donald P. Wright, et al., 113-114.

an ineffective block mounted by Pakistani forces on the border, meant that the key aim of the operations, the capture or destruction of OBL and AQ, failed to be achieved.

Analysis of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM

Michael O'Hanlon has called the UW campaign fought in Afghanistan a "Flawed Masterpiece," and when taken in the wider context of operations in eastern Afghanistan as well as the initial operations to oust the Taliban leadership then the 'Afghan Model' is not the unqualified success that has previously been suggested.⁸⁰ This said, General Tommy Franks the CENTCOM Commander, had little option other than to use the Northern Alliance. As Donald Wright points out "The Afghan theater of war was remotely located in central Asia, a great distance from the sea and in a region that was unwilling to support a large US presence."⁸¹ There are a number of lessons that can be learned from this operation in terms of employment of proxy forces.

The rapid nature of the developing campaign outstripped US CENTCOM and SOCCENT planning. This demonstrates the lack of doctrinal understanding and experience of planning proxy operations in these headquarters. The immediate availability of air power to support Northern Alliance operations, and the flexibility of the ODAs to capitalize on this was a significant factor in achieving early effect on the Taliban forces and maintaining the momentum of the campaign. Air power played a critical role in providing the necessary combat power to outmatch Taliban forces. The effects of air power were enhanced by the Taliban's lack of flexibility in changing their tactics to disperse their forces. Initially, large concentrations of Taliban forces in fixed positions allowed ODAs to inflict heavy casualties. AQ forces in the Tora Bora area learned from

⁸⁰Michael O'Hanlon, "A Flawed Masterpiece," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 3 (March/April 2002): 47-63.

⁸¹Donald Wright, *A Different Kind of War*, 318.

the Taliban experience by dispersing into their cave complexes. This dispersion, coupled with the nature of the mountainous terrain, made air power less effective in the Tora Bora battle.

The provision of significant amounts of money, supplies, and weapons by the CIA, in addition to the provision of air power, bought the US forces considerable influence with Northern Alliance forces. The careful distribution of this support to all factions resulted in separate relationships, initially with a wide variety of disparate North Alliance groupings and subsequently with some Pashtun groupings in the south.⁸² This is a clear example of the need to engage widely across a proxy force and maintain a level of influence through the control of material support. Despite this level of influence, Northern Alliance leaders still advanced on Kabul, against US direction, thus preventing the less well-organized anti-Taliban Pashtun forces, preparing to advance from the south, sharing in the liberation of Kabul.

The ability of an SFG to act as a JSOTF is an important lesson, which has since been addressed in light of the campaign. “Task Force Dagger” was not optimized to act as a JSOTF and this was identified as an issue, particularly during the operations against AQ in the Eastern Mountains. While this might be seen to be a US-centric lesson, the need to rapidly form both a Joint Fires Element and a Joint Special Operations Aviation Component within the “Task Force Dagger” headquarters demonstrates the importance of rapidly deploying a well trained Operational level HQ to coordinate and synchronise proxy force operations.⁸³

Once the Northern Alliance and US SOF reached Kabul, there was a classic divergence of purpose. US Forces wished to pursue OBL and his AQ fighters as quickly as possible, but the Northern Alliance commanders saw their task as complete and switched to their power politics that followed the fall of the Taliban Government. Michael O’Hanlon has argued that this is a fundamental weakness in the ‘Afghan Model’ maintaining that proxy forces cannot be expected

⁸²Paschall, 57.

⁸³Peltier, 68.

to fight consistently for US (or a coalition's) military objectives.⁸⁴ Added to this, due to the issues of ethnic tribal divides, the US forces found themselves reliant on Pashtun Warlords, and having to work with less motivated, poorly trained, and inexperienced Anti-Taliban Pashtun forces. This "marriage of convenience" is not unusual within proxy/sponsor relationships and in the case of Afghanistan engaging with a broad cross section of ethnic groups also prevented one group from becoming too influential.⁸⁵ With ODAs having to forge new relationships with a less capable force it is not surprising that the Eastern Alliance forces were unable to achieve the objectives set by CENTCOM in the Tora Bora Mountains complex. Ultimately the US strategy paid the price for having to change horses half way through the fight from Northern Alliance to Eastern Alliance.

The opening months of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM demonstrated the importance of interagency cooperation. CIA and US SOF worked closely together in a mutually beneficial relationship. The CIA provided the necessary funding, intelligence, and established relationships with the Northern Alliance commanders. US SOF provided command and control assets, coordinated and synchronized air power while deconflicting Northern Alliance activity. The importance of interagency cooperation can be argued, needs to be adopted across government to ensure all elements of state power are brought to bear in the proxy relationship.

Andres, Wills, and Griffith argue in their study of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM that the "Afghan Model" is a new and valid type of warfare, combining precision air attack, SOF, and proxy forces to achieve the objectives previously undertaken by large scale land components. "The lesson of Afghanistan and Iraq is that, when used correctly, the Afghan model offers the

⁸⁴O'Hanlon.

⁸⁵Day, 8.

United States strategic advantage and leverage abroad.”⁸⁶ They counter the Tora Bora criticisms by suggesting that it was a failure of US planning in that their use of proxy forces was overly ambitious in view of the Eastern Alliance’s training, motivation and cohesion.

Stephen Biddle, of the US Strategic Studies Institute, suggests the Afghan Model was successful due to the combination of a number of factors.⁸⁷ These were: poor morale, poor training and expertise, a lack of popular support for the Taliban regime, ease of defection in Afghan culture and surprise. Additionally, Taliban dependency on fragile sources of outside support, availability of contiguous and secure territory for resupply of forces all contributed to the success of the Afghan model. Biddle maintains that the Afghan experience demonstrates that this was not necessarily a new form of warfare through a proxy but the conventional use of force, ‘To overcome skilled, resolute opposition required both precision fire *and* maneuver; neither alone was sufficient in Afghanistan.’⁸⁸

As with all proxy force operations the conflict termination phase proved to be the most challenging and ultimately demonstrates the key weakness of proxy warfare. At the start of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, a protracted presence in Afghanistan was not foreseen. Indeed the lessons of Afghan history clearly showed that an enduring presence was to be avoided and hence the use of proxy forces. As the coalition expanded to include NATO and some fifty-one-member nations, the objectives of the operation developed into a far more ambitious stability operation. The moral compulsion for Western nations not to simply leave a state to its own devices following a proxy operation where there will always be tension. Afghanistan is an example of the challenges that face a state when its campaign aims have been met and conflict

⁸⁶Richard, B. Andres, Craig Wills, E. Thomas, and Griffith Jnr, “Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model,” *International Security* 30, no. 3 (Winter 2005): 127.

⁸⁷Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and The Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defence Policy* (US Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), 12.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

termination becomes the key focus. With proxy partners rapidly losing their unity of purpose and transitioning to political self-interest, the coalition was forced to remain engaged and is still engaged thirteen years later. The initial success of a proxy force campaign in Afghanistan resulted in a very light conventional coalition force presence during the initial years of the Afghan mission. Arguably, this was a significant factor in allowing the Taliban insurgency to establish itself, resulting in a much larger NATO effort in stabilization operations from 2005 onwards. The cost in both blood and treasure has been considerable and far outweighs the early expenditure of the initial proxy force operations.

Libya 2011--Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR

The international community intervened in the Libyan civil war of 2011, first as a coalition of the willing under Operation ODYSSEY DAWN and then under the NATO Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR. Western states, led by the United Kingdom and France, felt morally compelled to intervene in Libya to prevent the slaughter of civilians who rose up against the Gaddafi regime. What started as the implementation of a ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) human life operation, rapidly developed into a campaign to support revolutionary regime change.⁸⁹ NATO nations found themselves supporting the fragmented and dysfunctional Anti-Gaddafi Forces (AGF) as a de facto proxy force.⁹⁰ This was not, however, a straightforward UW operation. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1973 on Libya was passed rapidly, with the clauses “all necessary means” and “protect Libyan civilians” making it open to

⁸⁹Jonathan Eyal, *The Responsibility to Protect: A Chance Missed in Short War Long Shadow*, Whitehall Report 1-12, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2012), 54-62. For an in-depth analysis of the R2P issues in relation to Libya.

⁹⁰Michael Clarke, *The Making of Britain's Libya Strategy*, Whitehall Report 1-12, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2012), 7-13. Jonathan Eyal, *The Responsibility to Protect: A Chance Missed in Short War Long Shadow*, Whitehall Report 1-12, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2012), 54-62.

broad interpretation. As the conflict progressed this interpretation grew increasingly broad.⁹¹ This said, the UNSCR 1973 did impose significant constraints on NATO making direct support to the revolutionary groups problematic. Initially, limited non-combatant advisors were deployed from the more forward leaning members of the NATO coalition. However, as the conflict dragged on some coalition members resorted to more direct means of support. The full extent of this support may not be known for some time but there are numerous media reports of NATO SOF elements deployed in the frontline fight against Pro-Gaddafi Forces (PGF).

Libya's "Arab Spring" began in earnest with protests in the Eastern city of Benghazi on the 17th February 2011 and rapidly spreading across large areas of the country. Between 18 and 24 February, the PGF were expelled from Benghazi and fighting broke out in Misrata and Zawiyah, west of the capitol Tripoli. On 5 March the National Transitional Council (NTC), the revolutionaries' political body, held its first meeting in Benghazi. On 6 March PGF retook Ras Lanuf and Brega, south of Benghazi. Consensus for international action rapidly built-up with the Arab League voting in favor of an UN-backed no-fly zone on 17 March, and UNSCR 1973 was passed in the UN Security Council. With PGF reaching the outskirts of Benghazi France, British and US aircraft, under US AFRICOM command, struck PGF to disrupt attacks. The AGF were then able to mount a counter-offensive driving PGFs back down to the coast as far as Bin Jawad. On 31 March, NATO formally took command of the operation renamed Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR.⁹² Changing tactics to mirror the revolutionaries, PGF returned to the offensive on 7 April, retaking lost ground as far east as Brega some 200 kilometers south of Benghazi. In early

⁹¹UNSCR 1973 was significant in that it was the first time that the UN Security council had authorized the use of force for humanitarian protection purposes against the wishes of a functioning state (Libya). Further analysis can be found in Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, "The New Politics of Protection? Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and the Responsibility to Protect," *International Affairs* (The Royal Institute of International Affairs) 87:4 (2011): 825 - 850.

⁹²While NATO led the operation it was in fact a diverse coalition of nations that participated including Sweden but most importantly the Arab states of Qatar, UAE and Jordan.

April, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy deployed military advisors to Benghazi as part of broader diplomatic missions. The “Eastern Front” stabilized around the town of Ajdabiya, 50 kilometers north of Brega and the focus of fighting switched to the Jebel Nafusa Mountains in Western Libya and to the central port city of Misrata. In hard fought engagements, AGF pushed back PGF over the next month to establish enclaves, but these enclaves still remained under PGF indirect fire. Throughout the months of June and July a stalemate developed with neither side taking much ground. In mid-July AGF launched attacks to retake Brega with limited success. At the start of August, among reports of the presence of foreign SOF, AGF launched attacks from Misrata and the Jebel Nafusa on Tripoli.⁹³ AGF entered Tripoli in late August and Gaddafi’s Bab al-Azizia compound fell on 23 August, effectively ending his capricious 42-year rule of Libya. Fighting continued into October as AGF closed in on Gaddafi’s hometown stronghold of Sirte, where Gaddafi was finally captured and killed on 20 October 2011.⁹⁴

The Libya conflict was not a classic UW operation and the reasons for this are worth closer scrutiny. The impetus for this operation came from the leaders of the United Kingdom and France, Prime Minister David Cameron and President Nicolas Sarkozy. Libya was the first real test of the enhanced cooperation in the new entente between the two countries.⁹⁵ Significantly in the United Kingdom, the newly formed National Security Council was not used to formulate the Libyan crisis policy, merely to execute it. Libya also did not fit neatly within the “priority tasks” laid down in the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS).⁹⁶ The decision of the Obama

⁹³Mark Philips, *The Ground Offensive: The Role of Special Forces in Accidental Heroes*, Interim Campaign Report, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2011), 10-13.

⁹⁴Varun Vira and Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Libyan Uprising—An Uncertain Trajectory*, CSIS, Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic & International Studies (2011), 2-73. For a fuller summary of the key events of the Libyan conflict.

⁹⁵Alistair Cameron, *The Channel Axis: France, the UK and NATO in Short War Long Shadow*, Whitehall Report 1-12, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2012), 15-22.

⁹⁶Clarke, 7.

Administration to take a backseat in the conflict also characterized how the conflict played out. “Leading from Behind,” as the United States stance has been interpreted, pushed other NATO nations to the fore, while the US continued to provide essential supporting assets to the operation. As the conflict progressed, it was Prime Minister Cameron and President Sarkozy who drove the expansion of the mission from R2P to regime change. Both political leaders found themselves seeking viable proxies in a very confused situation. Both the NTC and AGF were unknown quantities and there was considerable concern as to possible malign influences within the revolutionary movements. From a military perspective, the AGF were fragmented. There were a multitude of fighting groups, divided geographically between the eastern forces, based in Benghazi, the Misratans, east of Tripoli, and the Jabal Naffusa groupings in the mountains to the southwest of Tripoli.⁹⁷ Within these areas the groupings in Misrata and the Jabal Naffusa were significantly more united, their unity being forged from necessity against the continual pressure of PGF attacks. In the east however, groups were based both on regional links, such as the “Tobruk Battalion,” and religious groups such as the 17th February Brigade, with links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Military expertise was in short supply throughout the AGF. Many soldiers had defected to the revolution but often the ‘Shabab’ civilian youth fighters, who constituted the majority of the AGF fighters, did not trust them. This resulted in a reluctance to accept former soldiers as leaders and reluctance on the soldiers’ part to step forward and take command.⁹⁸ For a number of months a power struggle ensued for the leadership of the AGF. General Fattah Younes had commanded Gaddafi’s Special Forces Brigade in Benghazi until his defection to the revolution and General Khalifa Hifter who had returned from a 20 years of exile, were both self-

⁹⁷The revolutionaries in the Jebal Nafusa were predominantly ethnic Burbas making them a very distinct faction within the AGFs.

⁹⁸For a useful description of AGF composition in Eastern Libya see Mark Philip’s report *The Ground Offensive: The Role of Special Forces*.

proclaimed leaders of the AGF.⁹⁹ General Younes was assassinated in Benghazi in late July by another grouping within the fragmented AGF, clearly demonstrating the fragile nature of the AGF.

The United Kingdom, France, and Italy deployed military and civil advisors to Benghazi in early March 2011.¹⁰⁰ Importantly, these were whole of government missions including diplomats, military staff, and aid planners. These teams provided their capitals with ground truth on the revolutionaries and imparted advice and influence on the emerging organizations. The military force elements were under national command and had no formal linkage with the NATO Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) based in Naples. Within the NATO Alliance, opinion was divided on how much contact should be established with the AGF in light of the restrictions imposed by UNSCR 1973. Valuable information from Benghazi therefore had to be passed via national capitals to Naples.¹⁰¹ Western nations provided non-lethal aid to the revolutionaries but due to the embargo clauses of UNSCR 1973, felt unable to provide weapons and training to the AGF. Qatar and the UAE however did not feel constrained and provided weapons and low-level training.¹⁰² Arguably, the decision by Western powers to allow this action was the most evident departure from the UNSCR.¹⁰³ Qatar and UAE identified those factions that they believed were the best organized which in effect made them the “King Makers” for these particular groupings, enhancing their capabilities and influence, which in turn caused resentment amongst other groups.

⁹⁹Vira and Cordesman, 38-42.

¹⁰⁰The author of this monograph deployed to Benghazi, first as the Military team deputy and then as the team leader. Initially a six-man team deployed which was then augmented with a team of eight mentors to work with French and Italian counter-parts in advising the AGF on setting up an Operational Headquarters to coordinate the campaign.

¹⁰¹Information rather than intelligence was passed from the Advisory teams in Benghazi as this information could not be verified without observers on the ground.

¹⁰²Mark Urban, “Inside Story of the UK's Secret Mission to beat Gaddafi,” *Newsnight*, BBC (London: BBC, 19 January 2012), 8.

¹⁰³Eyal, 60.

Qatar in particular identified Islamist groups to back, leading to claims of meddling in Libya to increase its regional influence. Ultimately this would backfire on Qatar losing them influence with the post-war interim Libyan Government.¹⁰⁴

The relationship between the revolutionaries and the NATO coalition also had an important bearing on the conflict. Once engaged, the Libyan Revolutionaries saw NATO as the de facto guarantor of the revolution. As Michael Clarke points out, “The military logic of the UN resolution effectively turned the coalition into the air arm of the rebels in a civil war.”¹⁰⁵ Libyans could not understand why NATO would not act as their air wing and wanted NATO aircraft to act in the Close Air Support role to revolutionary operations. NATO, constrained by the detail of the UNSCR, as well as international and coalition consensus, was unable to act in this fashion. This dynamic was further complicated by a NATO, self-imposed, requirement for zero civilian casualties from NATO air attacks and rapidly changing tactics by PGF to mimic AGF tactics, thus making their targeting far more difficult by NATO aircraft. Those Libyans already in liberated areas also believed strongly that each city or town must liberate itself. Without the prospect of a rapid link-up with AGF, many cities were understandably reluctant to rise up. In addition, thousands of Libyan civilians had been pressed into service on the frontline to fight with PGF, making the AGF revolutionaries reluctant to close with and destroy their enemy for fear of inflicting casualties on fellow Libyans.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Shashank Joshi, *The Complexity of Arab Support in Short War Long Shadow*, Whitehall Report 1-12, Royal United Service Institute (London: RUSI, 2012), 64-69.

¹⁰⁵Clarke, 11.

¹⁰⁶Capt Tim Edwards, “Understanding Free Libyan Forces—April to July 2011,” *British Army Review* (Corporate Document Services) 155 (Autumn 2012): 66 - 71. Capt Edwards served as the author’s J2 Officer in Libya. Details on PGF composition and tactic as well as AGF motivations and tactics gained from interviews with senior AGF commanders by the author of this monograph.

Analysis of Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR

On first inspection the Libyan conflict does not seem to be a classic UW campaign as seen in Afghanistan. Indeed, Dr. Geraint Hughes suggests that the Libyan conflict does not quite fit the template of a proxy war.¹⁰⁷ Shashank Joshi argues that the progressive reporting of Western and Arab SOF activity, as the AGF started to prepare for an assault on Tripoli, illustrates that the Libyan conflict converged with the “Afghan model” as the campaign drew to a climax.¹⁰⁸ Mark Philips concludes that, “Special Forces activity was a vital enabler.”¹⁰⁹ This may be overstating the case, but with very little known of SOF operations in Libya this is a difficult judgment to make. What is clear is with the US taking a supporting role in the conflict and the political sensitivities of stepping beyond the UNSCR 1973, US SOF was never likely to have deployed, nor did the US provide any military advisors to the AGF leadership in Benghazi. It is important to note that despite a lack of political consensus within NATO and the absence of the United States in its traditional leadership role, a coalition of countries did engage, to greater or lesser extent, in a proxy conflict.

Those NATO leaders who took the coalition into the Libyan conflict with no clear end state took considerable risk. NATO always maintained that their operations were purely about creating enough damage to the Gaddafi regime to ensure he and his inner-circle quit power. It became apparent as the conflict progressed that regime change and revolutionary victory were the primary goals of the leading nations in the coalition.¹¹⁰ NATO continued to prosecute the campaign under significant political restriction and these restrictions inevitably extended the duration of the campaign. With such a loose and chaotic group of revolutionary fighters from the

¹⁰⁷Hughes, 5-6.

¹⁰⁸Shashank Joshi, *How the Rebels Became an Effective Fighting Foreign Accidental Heroes*, Interim Campaign Report, Royal United Services Institute (London: RUSI, 2011), 11.

¹⁰⁹Philips, 12.

¹¹⁰Vira and Cordesman, 5-6.

AGF, and the restriction placed on direct support, it took time and patience for the Gadaffi regime to finally fall. With crucial public support wavering over the summer months it seems likely that the leading nations increased their contributions of direct support to AGF, risking collapse in public support and coalition unity.

NATO nations were able to expand their interpretation of UNSCR 1973 to justify their actions in adopting a proxy-sponsor relationship with the NTC and AGF, but at what cost? A number of states, most notably China and Russia, claimed that NATO took actions not authorized by UNSCR 1973. This stretching of the mandate, particularly by the leading NATO nations, may have important long-term impacts on future crisis that meet the criteria of the R2P concept. The impact of NATO's actions are already been felt in the Syrian crisis where China and Russia, in light of the Libya experience, refuse to authorize a UN mandate for the international community to take action collectively. While this might not be the only reason for lack of international action in Syria, it is perhaps one of the most important factors at play.¹¹¹

The Libyan conflict did not generate a traditional proxy-sponsor relationship. Libyans are proud of their revolution and, while they were content to receive support to their forces and the benefits of air and maritime components indirectly supporting their campaign, they clearly stated that they wished to achieve a Libyan victory without foreign ground troops deployed on Libyan soil.¹¹² While this Libyan approach was entirely understandable, it made very uncomfortable news in the coalition capitals, only too aware of the finite levels of patience and support amongst ambivalent electorates for the Libya intervention. Sponsor support that was given from the west focused on non-lethal equipment, in-line with the UN arms embargo. Despite providing air and maritime support, a lack of direct lethal aid from the western nations resulted in limited influence for advisors working with the AGF in Benghazi. The dangers of providing lethal aid to specific

¹¹¹Clarke, 11.

¹¹²Interviews with TNC and AFG members conducted by the author.

groups within the AGF were demonstrated by Qatar whose support to Islamist groupings caused considerable concern both amongst Libyans and the other members of the coalition. This was a trap that the United States was careful to avoid in Afghanistan and proved adept at ensuring all groupings were engaged and were appropriately supported.

Considerable risk was taken by supporting the NTC and AGF by the leading coalition nations. The conflict, like much of the “Arab Spring,” was unforeseen and so very little was known about the revolutionaries. With the chaotic nature of the revolution it took some time for a picture to emerge of the motivations and politics of the various groups. The deployment of a whole of government team from the leading nations, including diplomats, aid organizations and military personnel, proved effective in providing sponsor governments with ground truth and significant influence on the emerging institutions of the revolution. These deployments therefore helped to mitigate the risk of backing an essentially unknown entity in the form of the NTC and AGF.

It is again in the area of conflict termination that the Libyan conflict is problematic for the west. The conflict ended with the summary execution of Gadaffi in Sirte, but levels of violence remain high a year later and the emerging state of Libya is experiencing significant growing pains. The relative chaos of post-Gadaffi Libya sees an ungoverned space, which is allowing the emergence of Islamist groups and weapon proliferation into the wider region fueling sub-Saharan conflict. Both the international community and the Libyans did not wish to see an SFOR or ISAF type deployment into Libya, but the reality is that such a force is probably needed to help restore civil order and disarm militias. The UN has responsibility for post conflict reconstruction in Libya and oil revenue will provide the financial support required. Due to the unforeseen nature of the conflict, very limited coherent post conflict planning was able to take place. The immediate aftermath of the Libyan conflict has led to concerns over ungoverned space providing a fertile area for extremists to take hold. The issue of weapons proliferation has also

caused considerable concern, especially for MANPAD surface-to-air missile launchers. These issues have led to increased instability in the region, not least the rise of Islamic extremists in Mali to the south of Libya. It remains to be seen just how effective efforts will be to establish a functioning democratic state in post-war Libya.

ANALYSIS

From this study of proxy warfare it is clear that there are considerable risks involved in the proxy/sponsor relationship. The use of a proxy force as the substitute for the deployment of a Land Component does however have some clear advantages particularly in the context of an overt relationship as envisaged in the context of an overt coalition operation. There are a number of factors to consider when making the decision to engage with a proxy force to utilize it as a Land Component in a coalition campaign.

Identifying a Suitable Proxy

Both campaign studies presented in this monograph demonstrated how difficult it can be to assess the suitability of a proxy. In the case of Afghanistan, circumstances required a rapid engagement with a proxy force due to the requirement to act quickly to demonstrate the United States resolve both for international and domestic audiences. While in the case of Libya, the consequences of the coalition's actions, in responding to the crisis, left them with a de facto proxy in the NTC and AGF about whom they had little or no in-depth knowledge. Where possible, the risks of engaging in such proxy relationships can be mitigated with the following measures.

Intelligence: Accurate and timely intelligence will be required on potential proxy organizations. In the case of Afghanistan, the CIA had been active in the country prior to 9/11 and so existing relationships could be exploited. Often however, as in the case of Libya, these relationships do not exist. A rapid deployment of liaison personnel is required to make an assessment of the suitability of a potential proxy. This is most effective, as in the case of Libya,

where it is a whole of government team able to engage with and assess all aspects of a potential proxy organization.

Building a Relationship. Relationships are best developed over time as such early engagement in Phase 0 or 1 of a campaign will help mitigate risk. This engagement develops trust between the proxy and sponsor thus enabling an effective relationship to develop.

“Upstream Engagement”: As more western nations recognize the benefits of pre-emptive engagements, as a means of conflict prevention, a better understanding of regions prone to conflict should emerge. “Upstream engagement” in the form of FID provides early understanding of potential conflict regions and enhances general cultural awareness of the region. FID activity will usually be focused on supporting governments, however, the broader regional situational awareness acquired, and the development of skills required for FID activity, will also benefit potential proxy force operations in those regions.

Political Dimension: Proxy force operations are, by their nature controversial for many democratic states. Within a coalition operation the selection and development of a proxy force will be politically challenging. In the event that the coalition is made up of willing nations such as operations in Iraq in 2003, then establishing consensus may be less problematic. However in the case of broader alliances such as NATO, then the concept of operating through a proxy force may not sit well with some member states’ political outlook. In these instances, where an overt use of a proxy force is to be undertaken, then consensus building will need to be pursued focusing on the advantages of proxy operations in terms of legitimacy, limiting foreign troop’s deployment, and gaining greater regional support. Libya would seem to provide an example of more forward leaning NATO nations possibly deploying SOF covertly in an attempt to resolve the conflict more swiftly. This example demonstrates that there are continuing complexities to the employment of proxy forces, particularly when not supported by an international mandate.

Planning and Execution of a Proxy Force Campaign

Detailed planning will be required for the conduct of a campaign utilizing proxy forces. Joint and Component planning staff must have a sound knowledge, based in doctrine, of the nature of proxy operations in order to achieve maximum synergies in the employment of proxy forces. Such plans will need to be highly flexible in order to minimize the disruption inherent in the chaotic nature of proxy force operations. An agile staff versed in proxy operations must be able to adapt to rapidly changing dynamics in the proxy land environment.

In order to manage the relationship with the proxy and to synchronize their activity within the context of a coalition, there is a requirement for an operational headquarters to engage with the proxy and the other components. While US SOF will have this capability and capacity, other nations or forces may not. Conventional forces and headquarters may well need to be called on to fulfill this function. This is a demanding task and will often be dependent on the provision of physical support to the proxy to generate the necessary influence to effectively manage the proxy force within the wider context of a combined campaign.

Critical to the successful execution of a proxy force campaign, as part of a wider coalition operation, will be establishing unity of purpose and unity of command. The campaign studies within this monograph have demonstrated how difficult this is to achieve throughout the duration of a campaign. The level of tactical sophistication displayed by the proxy force will have an important bearing on this relationship. If the proxy force is well-trained and equipped then the proxy/sponsor relationship will be more akin to an alliance on equal terms. If the force requires equipment, training, and supporting capabilities, such as communications links to coalition airpower, then the sponsor will potentially gain more influence over the proxy through the management of resources given to the proxy. Without the provision of direct support to a proxy in conducting ground operations, a sponsor will only achieve limited influence over a proxy's actions. However, the sponsor must be careful not to unbalance the proxy force dynamics through

supporting specific factions within the force. The benefits of adhering to this principle can be clearly seen in the US strategy with the Northern Alliance, while the impact in getting this wrong can be seen in Qatar's activities in Libya.

The level of orchestration of support to the proxy forces will differ in each crisis. What is clear from the campaign studies above is that direct support from sponsor troops on the ground, particularly in coordinating air support, is highly advantageous. Alistair Finlan observed operations in Afghanistan, "Acting as a nexus between tribal warrior and sophisticated twenty-first century air power, SF were a substantial force multiplier that ultimately helped to crack the Taliban regime from within Afghanistan itself."¹¹³

Conflict Termination.

The conflict termination phase of a proxy campaign provides the biggest risk to the proxy sponsor relationship. As campaign aims are likely to diverge, the legitimacy of both proxy and sponsor is threatened. The dangers of the proxy pursuing its own aims and potentially engaging in human rights violations provides a huge risk to the credibility of the sponsor, both to a domestic audience and to the international community. To counter this threat, a coalition will need to conduct detailed planning well in advance of the termination of a conflict. This will require development of detailed consequence management and development of alternative means of influence. Ultimately this may require the continued engagement in the post-conflict state to stabilize the situation. Where possible, other international bodies must be sought to assume responsibility for the post conflict phase to ensure coalition forces are not sucked into a prolonged stabilization mission, as has happened in Afghanistan.

¹¹³Alastair Finlan, "Warfare by Other Means: Special Forces, Terrorism and Grand Strategy," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 14:1 (2003): 92-108.

CONCLUSION

The issue of engaging proxy forces, particularly in an overt campaign as a substitute for a land component in a coalition operation, is highly complex. Operating within a coalition context can be challenging enough for those states participating, often with differing national interests. Superimpose the added complexity of synchronizing operation with a proxy force and the challenges increase significantly. This is not to say that such operations cannot be successful as can be seen from the two campaign studies examined in this monograph. However, it is in the operational and tactical aspects of these operations that success is most marked. At the strategic level, proxy force operations entail significant risk. In the example of Afghanistan, with the exception of the failure to capture OBL and AQ force elements, US forces and their Northern Alliance proxy were successful in removing the Taliban regime. At the strategic level however the US and her allies have been committed to thirteen years of stability operations following an inconclusive conflict termination phase to the operation. In Libya, the leading nations took considerable risk in backing the NTC and AGF, having to stretch the UN mandate to a breaking point to achieve their national goals of removing the Gadaffi Regime. This action may have serious repercussions for the future in terms of achieving any form of international mandate for intervention operations. China and Russia are unlikely to support an international mandate for such operations having seen what they perceive as a breaking of the Libya UN mandate.

Dr. Hughes characterizes proxy warfare as fundamentally anti-strategic. He argues that “a state’s grade strategy should involve the use of specific means (diplomatic, economic, military and covert) to achieve these objectives, but by sponsoring proxies governments effectively abandon any control over the means by which strategic goals should be attained.”¹¹⁴ While this

¹¹⁴Hughes, 144.

might be true, it is clear from the case studies in this monograph that circumstances often conspire to make proxy forces an attractive or only option available to employ.

This study has shown that each crisis will be different and the employment of proxy forces must be judged on its own merits. What is clear is that proxy force operations are not well understood outside the SOF community. With the possible requirement to synchronize proxy force activity with conventional air and maritime components, a broader understanding of proxy force operations is required. Writing in the *Small Wars Journal*, David S. Maxwell observes “in the end, UW should be understood by policy makers, strategists and campaign planners as a strategic option for the US requiring long term preparation to maximize the potential effectiveness.”¹¹⁵ The three largest intervention operations conducted by western forces since 9/11 have all included a proxy force element to the campaign. This would therefore suggest that there is a pressing need to introduce proxy force doctrine into mainstream military planning doctrine to ensure that future planners have a better understanding of the implications of operating through a proxy. Following thirteen years of sustained overseas stability operations, western nations have limited appetite to engage in costly coalition intervention campaigns in the immediate future. Proxy forces therefore present a potential option to meet the requirements of a land component. A proxy force comes with significant risks and therefore should not be the default option for coalition operation. As has been seen however, the circumstances of rapidly developing crisis may make a necessity out of employing a proxy force in a coalition campaign.

¹¹⁵Maxwell, 8.

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