

BREAKING THROUGH THE TENSION: THE OPERATIONAL ART OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN PHASE ZERO

A Monograph

by

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Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States has espoused engagement as its leading strategic principle. Despite this emphasis, engagement has yet to coalesce into a grand strategy. The US military, as one component of US power abroad, is often sub-optimized in the pre-crisis, peacetime realm where engagements occur. In this environment, colloquially titled "Phase Zero," the US military lacks an operational art. Defined as the linkage of tactics to strategy, the operational art in Phase Zero is an emerging field of study and practice.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) provide unique approaches in Phase Zero environments. The examination of special operations approaches in Phase Zero provides insights into the challenges of devising and executing a Phase Zero operational art. By examining the intersection of policy, programs and posture in Yemen, Indonesia, and Thailand, tensions are identified and analyzed. Within these tensions, special operations efforts to construct a Phase Zero operational art are examined. This monograph concludes with observations about the logic, methods, and challenges of formulating a special operations operational art in Phase Zero.

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ABSTRACT

BREAKING THROUGH THE TENSION: THE OPERATIONAL ART OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN PHASE ZERO by COL Brian S. Petit, United States Army, 95 pages.

Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States has espoused engagement as its leading strategic principle. Despite this emphasis, engagement has yet to coalesce into a grand strategy. The US military, as one component of US power abroad, is often sub-optimized in the pre-crisis, peacetime realm where engagements occur. In this environment, colloquially titled “Phase Zero,” the US military lacks an operational art. Defined as the linkage of tactics to strategy, the operational art in Phase Zero is an emerging field of study and practice.

Special Operations Forces (SOF) provide unique approaches in Phase Zero environments. The examination of special operations approaches in Phase Zero provides insights into the challenges of devising and executing a Phase Zero operational art. By examining the intersection of policy, programs and posture in Yemen, Indonesia, and Thailand, tensions are identified and analyzed. Within these tensions, special operations efforts to construct a Phase Zero operational art are examined. This monograph concludes with observations about the logic, methods, and challenges of formulating a special operations operational art in Phase Zero.

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty years after the Cold War, the United States (US) lacks a grand strategy.¹ This absence reflects the difficulty in defining an overarching idea for the US in today's complex, multipolar, and power-diffused world. Lacking a grand strategy, the US executes multiple *strategies* that compete in a Darwinian forum to gain prominence, influence policies, and determine resource commitment.² Of these competing strategies, one idea has emerged as a poor substitute, yet a reliable surrogate, for grand strategy: engagement.³

Engagement is broadly defined as “the active participation of the United States in relationships beyond our borders.”⁴ Engagement is conducted by US diplomatic, defense, or development agencies to promote relationships, programs, and progress deemed mutually beneficial to both the US and its friends and allies. For adversaries and competitors, engagement displays transparency and dialogue with strategic signaling that demonstrates US power, intent and capability without unnecessary provocations.⁵

Peacetime engagement events represent US policy-in-action. Engagement events, enacted in the diplomatic, military, information and economic realms, comprise the ways and means to

¹Edward Luttwak, *The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 207-217. Henry Mintzberg and James Brian Quinn, *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 3d ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1998), 367-78. Everett Carl Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 26-30.

²Walter A. McDougall, “The Constitutional History of U.S. Foreign Policy: 222 Years of Tension in the Twilight Zone,” Center for the Study of America and the West at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (based on lectures delivered at the Annenberg Summer Teacher Institute, National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA, 27 July 2010), September 2010.

³The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America, May 2010* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2010), http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf (accessed 26 September 2012).

⁴*Ibid.*, 19.

⁵Richard L. Kugler, *New Directions in National Security Strategy, Defense Plans, and Diplomacy: A Review of Official Strategic Documents* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 25.

achieve strategic ends.⁶ In military parlance, engagement occurs in “Phase Zero” or the pre-crisis environment in which state relations are peaceful and routine.⁷ Though all military engagements can inherently be associated with preparation for warfare, the explicit purpose of many Phase Zero military engagements is to *prevent* war.⁸ The strategic logic is that where engagements exist, the US is *in dialogue*, applying a spectrum of efforts—short of warfare—to shape the strategic environment to its advantage.

Engagement is arguably the strongest enduring idea of the past twenty years of National Security Strategies (NSS) and foreign policy directives.⁹ The 1995 NSS of “Engagement and

⁶The term “engagement events” includes nearly all US actions abroad in peacetime environments. For the US Department of State, a key engagement event is a visit by the Secretary of State, which often is accompanied by a US resource commitment through new or existing programs. Different forms of engagements are discussed, in detail, in section three.

⁷Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-42. Joint doctrine employs a five-phase model for planning joint operations. Each phase in the five-phase joint phasing model by title (e.g., Shape or Deter) with the phase number in parenthesis (e.g., Shape (Phase 0) or Deter (Phase I)). This study uses the semantic distinction of “Phase Zero” instead of “Phase 0.” This distinction, common in the literature of Phase Zero discussions, is used as a descriptor of an environment and a condition (short of war) as opposed to simply a linear, numbered phase as part of a five-phase model.

⁸The annual posture statements of the US geographical (and functional) combatant commands are the most useful unclassified sources that articulate the totality and purpose of US military engagement programs. The posture statements are presented to Congress annually by the commanding general or admiral of the combatant command and are easily accessible online by searching “combatant command posture statement.”

⁹The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States, January 1993* (Washington DC: The White House, 1993). The 1993 NSS defines “engagement” as the overarching idea of national security in the post Soviet Union world.

The White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, February 1995.

The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, October 1998.

The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2002.

The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2006.

The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 2010.

Enlargement” codified US peacetime engagement as the leading line of effort to sustain US security. The 2010 NSS strikes a similar tone, citing engagement 43 times.¹⁰ Engagement remains *the* central idea for securing our nation—an aspirant toward grand strategy. Despite this emphasis, engagement has failed to coalesce into an idea or a method from which a grand strategy can grow.

One reason for this failure is the difficulty of arranging engagements in time, space, and purpose to construct or support a cohesive strategy.¹¹ The US armed forces, the executor of the military aspect of strategy, are often deficient in employing engagements to achieve strategic ends.¹² Despite the clear US strategic reliance on engagement, the crafting of military engagements to achieve strategic objectives is a practice with an insufficiently coherent *operational art*, the skillful linking of tactics to strategy. Without a clear operational art concept, the military component of engagement is an unreliable method to accomplish strategic objectives. For military engagement to fulfill the aims of US security strategy and propel “engagement” into an aspirant of grand strategy, an improved concept and practice of Phase Zero operational art is

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States by Al Qaeda, engagement remained a feature of national security strategies but arguably became subordinate in emphasis to counterterrorism. The 2010 NSS returned, in spirit and tone, to the 1993 NSS by elevating engagement as the main idea underpinning the goals and aspirations of the US.

¹⁰LTC Jan Kenneth Gleiman. “Operational Art and the Clash of Organizational Cultures: Postmortem on Special Operations as a Seventh Warfighting Function” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2011), 1. Gleiman cites the use of the term “engagement” 43 times in the 2010 NSS.

¹¹Strategists such as Everett Carl Dolman discuss the difficulty of forming strategy inside of complex, adaptive systems like global security structures. Engagements, which are incremental and cumulative rather than decisive, represent one of many independent variables acting to influence the overall system.

¹²General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: First Vintage Books, 2008), 308-334. Smith’s book is a polemic about the inadequacy of today’s modern military apparatus (not specifically the US) to contend with nature of modern warfare, or “war amongst the people.”

needed. To improve operational art in Phase Zero, the frictions and tensions must be identified and understood at levels beyond the standard military professional competencies.

The military conception of operational art remains principally in the domain of high intensity, combined arms warfare: the harmonious synchronization of military power to destroy an opposing military.¹³ This notion of operational art is valid for force-on-force warfare but is less relevant for an engagement-centric strategy. For the US to manage threats and realize its aspirations abroad, a complementary operational art is needed that is better suited for Phase Zero environments.

An operational art for engagement is forming, if slowly. The contours of engagement-centric operational art are emerging in form and practice across the armed services, in all combatant commands (COCOMs) and within the interagency. Among the leaders in crafting effective engagement campaigns are US Special Operations Forces (USSOF). Building on its core competency of foreign military engagement, USSOF are engineering improved form and function in the middle ground between tactics and strategy.¹⁴ USSOF—led by seven geographic Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs)—are designing and executing unique operational approaches in Phase Zero.¹⁵ USSOF Phase Zero campaigns, conducted under combatant command and ambassadorial authorities, possess a distinct, if difficult to define,

¹³Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips, ed., *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 2005). In this anthology, thematically “the operational artist’s center of gravity is the mass of the enemy military’s force and its ability to command and control its forces,” v.

¹⁴John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld, ed., *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Olsen and Van Creveld classify the operational art as the “gray area between tactics and strategy,” introduction, ix.

¹⁵The seven Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs) are discussed in chapter two.

character.¹⁶ USSOF Phase Zero campaigns are not traditional operational-level military campaigns, yet they are significantly more than the logical linkage of small tactical actions. This operational art, however nascent, is gradually finding its form. A key step in developing an effective operational art is identifying and understanding the frictions and tensions inherent to Phase Zero. This monograph analyzes how the application of special operations aims to construct an operational art within the tensions of Phase Zero.

Special Operations Phase Zero

USSOF currently conducts engagements in over 75 countries.¹⁷ Nearly all these USSOF engagements occur in the Phase Zero environment declared as routine military activities, informally labeled “upstream engagement.”¹⁸ In these environments, special operations are less a tool for war than a method of statecraft. The aim of special operations in Phase Zero is to offer combatant commanders, ambassadors, and host nations the right instrument to meet their security, diplomatic, or political challenges. As the strategic setting for the US shifts from large-scale expeditionary wars to multilateral cooperation, the skilled use of USSOF in upstream engagements holds great potential. Realizing this potential requires improved precision, nuance,

¹⁶Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, 11 August 2011, III-42. Campaigns are defined as a “series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space.” GL-6.

¹⁷Admiral William McRaven, Commander, US Special Operations Command, address to Sovereign Challenge IX, San Jose California, 6 June 2012. The author was present at Admiral McRaven’s address. McRaven cited the presence of USSOF in 77 countries. However, not all of these SOF engagements are in Phase Zero environments. The significant USSOF presence in Afghanistan, for example, cannot be considered a Phase Zero environment.

¹⁸The phrase “upstream engagement” conveys the idea of assessing and addressing problems in their infancy “upstream” in order to preclude having to contend later with major problems, up to and including costly combat operations. The British informally use the term “upstream engagement;” it has no formal doctrinal definition in US or British doctrine at this time.

and wisdom from civilian and military leaders arranging and directing special operations missions.¹⁹

The special operations Phase Zero paradigm is evolving under the confluence of four modern-day phenomena: a national strategic emphasis on partner engagement and multilateralism, a globally oriented and organizationally maturing United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), the proliferation of non-state threats less susceptible to conventional warfare, and the global diffusion of power.²⁰ Given the dynamic convergence of these factors, the search for a special operations operational art may reveal compelling insights on the broader ideas of US national strategies abroad. In turn, these revelations may stimulate new thinking on US grand strategy.

A critical assertion prefacing this study is that there *is* a special operations operational art in Phase Zero. This assertion is supported by three compelling developments: special operations global reach, a shifting strategic security environment, and the revised US military contemplation of the land and human domains.²¹

¹⁹Admiral William H. McRaven, *Posture Statement, Admiral William H. McRaven, USN, Commander, United States Special Operations Command, before the 112th Congress, United States Senate, March 06, 2012*, http://www.socom.mil/Documents/2012_SOCOM_POSTURE_STATEMENT.pdf (accessed 23 September 2012).

²⁰Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011). Nye uses the phrase “diffusion of power” to describe the shifting of power in the 21st century from singular, hegemonic nation-states with powerful militaries to an environment where a multitude of nations, actors, interest groups and populations have access to levers of power previously controlled by powerful nations.

²¹Major General Bennet S. Sacolick and Brigadier General Wayne W. Grigsby, Jr., “Special Operations/Conventional Force Interdependence: A Critical Role in ‘Prevent, Shape, Win,’” *Army Magazine*, vol. 62, no. 6 (June 2012): 39-42, <http://www.ousa.org/publications/armymagazine/archive/2012/06/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed 3 October 2012). USASOC introduced the concept of the ‘human domain’ in the 2012 initial draft of Army Doctrinal Publication 3-05, *Army Special Operations*. On 15 May 2012, the Doctrine 2015 General Officer Review Board delayed the inclusion of the term in Doctrine 2015 publications to allow for the further development and consideration of the idea. This article

First, the systemic and persistent global employment of special operations in undeclared hostile regions in over 75 countries is evidence enough to explore the special operations concept of operational art. Beyond special operations, all six geographic combatant commands are equally in pursuit of improved Phase Zero operational art paradigms.²² A better understanding of the special operations contribution, logic, and methods will assist both SOF and the COCOMs in optimizing the use of engagements in accomplishing strategic objectives.

Second, the US strategic security context needs amended concepts and methods to adapt to a shifting threat environment. Professor of military strategy Max Manwaring classifies US adversaries as increasingly “rhizomatic” with an “apparently hierarchical system above ground-visible in the operational and political arenas, and with another system centered in the roots underground.”²³ Further shifts in this strategic environment include hybrid adversaries, ubiquitous communications tools, global economic malaise, reduced NATO military capability, violent social identity conflicts, a contested cyber space, and stretched US military capacity.²⁴ Traditional US military power projection methods and major theater war are poor options to address many of these challenges.

defines the human domain as “The totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that the success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to win in population-centric conflicts,” 40.

²²The author visited five geographic combatant commands and USSOCOM, occurring between October 2012 and February 2013.

²³Max Manwaring, “Ambassador Stephen Krasner’s Orienting Principle for Foreign Policy (and Military Management)--Responsible Sovereignty” (Monograph, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College) Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, April 2012), 56, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=18> (accessed 28 September 2012).

²⁴Max Manwaring, “The Strategic Logic of the Contemporary Security Dilemma” (Monograph, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1 December 2011), Strategic Studies Institute, 1 December 2011, 58. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1091> (accessed 13 September 2012).

Finally, in 2012, US forces that principally operate on land—The US Army, The United States Marine Corps and Special Operations Forces - combined to create the office of Strategic Landpower.²⁵ The publicized intent is to shape both current operational constructs, future force structure thinking, and contend with the emerging concept of the “human domain.”²⁶ Defense analyst Steven Metz stated “the Office of Strategic Landpower will attempt to integrate the cross-cultural psychological skills of Special Operations Forces into the military’s land forces writ large.”²⁷ With focused, joint emphasis on strategic landpower constructs, a refined special operations operational art concept can aid the future coupling of US Army, Marine Corps and SOF capabilities in future upstream engagements.

This monograph analyzes how special operations seek to construct an operational art in Phase Zero. Special operations in Phase Zero are examined in three areas: policy, programs and posture. In the policy section, three vignettes are used to explore the intersection of policy and special operations. The vignettes examine special operations in Yemen, Indonesia, and Thailand. Over thirty personal interviews were conducted, many by special operations Phase Zero practitioners.²⁸ The vignettes and interviews help synthesize the intersecting ideas-in-practice of operational art, Phase Zero, and special operations.

²⁵Steven Metz, “Strategic Horizons: U.S. Army Prepares for the Human Domain of War,” *World Politics Review*,” (7 November 2012), <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12481/strategic-horizons-u-s-army-prepares-for-human-domain-of-war> (accessed 13 January 2013).

²⁶Sacolick and Grigsby, 40, and Metz, 2-3.

²⁷Metz, 3.

²⁸The author conducted semi-structured interviews using an open question framework. The interviews were designed as a dialogue intended to explore the interviewee’s particular experiences and opinions on special operations, operational art, and phase zero. No quantitative methods were employed nor did the interviewee’s answer a standard set of questions. Thus, no (quantitative) conclusions were drawn by comparing or evaluating the interviews as a whole. All interviewee’s gave permission for their quotes to be used either by name, or where specified, as non-attribution.

Study Organization

Part one introduces the monograph topic and explains the study organization. Part two defines and discusses the three main components of this study: operational art, special operations, and Phase Zero. Part three examines Phase Zero policy, programs, and posture. Yemen, Indonesia, and Thailand vignettes illustrate the tensions between US policy and USSOF Phase Zero actions. Part three concludes with implications and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Part two defines and discusses the three interlocking topics examined in this study: operational art, special operations and Phase Zero. Each topic is examined individually through the lens of history, theory, doctrine and modern practice.

Understanding Operational Art

Current US joint doctrine defines operational art as “the creative thinking used to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and to organize and employ military force.”²⁹ In the simplest terms, operational art is the purposeful linkage of tactics to strategy. Strategist Colin Gray states “strategy is the bridge that connects politics to military power.”³⁰ Extending this same logic, operational art is the bridge that meaningfully connects the use of engagements, battles and campaigns to accomplish strategic objectives.³¹

²⁹JP 5-0, I-5.

³⁰Colin S. Gray, *Strategy For Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the The Evidence of History* (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 92.

³¹The term “engagements” has two meanings: the first is a “tactical conflict, usually between opposing lower echelon maneuver forces” (Joint Publication 1-02); the second meaning, not normally associated with battlefield military tactics but germane to this study, is the engagement defined in the introduction of this paper (“the active participation of the United States in relationships beyond our borders”).

The inception of military campaigns conducted by industrial scale armies with vast geographic, logistic, and control challenges introduced an intermediate level of complexity between tactics and strategy.³² Thus, operational art was born out of the necessity to arrange training, tactics, logistics, operations, and campaigns on a macro scale in pursuit of strategic ends.³³ In essence, operational *art* grew from the emergence of the operational *level* of war.³⁴ Over time, operational art has gained acceptance as a practice that is not defined by a specific level of war, but rather as the cognitive and practical connection between campaigns, operations, and actions at all levels to the attainment of strategic goals.³⁵

The History of Operational Art

The massive growth of armies in the Napoleonic era of warfare is itself a compelling reason to consider early 19th century warfare the dawn of the operational art era.³⁶ Few dispute that Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) is among the first and the best of history's operational

³²Martin van Creveld, "Napoleon and the Dawn of Operational Warfare," in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9-34.

³³Creveld, 1-3. Bruce W. Menning, "Operational Art's Origins," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, ed. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 2005), 4-18.

³⁴Menning, 4-6. Aleksandr Svechin, *Strategiia*, 1927. Translated, edited and published as *Strategy* by Kent D. Lee (Minneapolis: Eastview Publications, 1992), 5. Some credit Svechin as the originator of the term and concept of "operational art" as associated with an intermediate level of war existing between strategy and tactics.

³⁵Headquarters, Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, October 2011). US Army doctrine now states that operational art can occur at lower tactical levels, such as the battalion. "Operational art is not associated with a specific echelon or formation, nor is it exclusive to joint force commanders. Instead, it must apply to any formation that must effectively arrange multiple, tactical actions in time, space and purpose, to achieve a strategic objective, in whole or in part," 9. Author interview A18 with the US Army Director of Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate (CADD), Mr. Clint Ancker, August 29, 2012.

³⁶Creveld, 17-19.

artists.³⁷ If Napoleon is not the first true operational artist, then his relation to operational art is equivalent to that of George Washington to the US Presidency: an indelible imprint of genius, leadership, vision and precedent that both defined the idea and set the measurement.

Napoleon's *Grand Armee* introduced a scale never before witnessed in warfare. The 1812 French campaign into Russia committed 600,000 French and allied troops on a transcontinental march *as part of* a French imperial strategy. Outcomes in Russia notwithstanding, Napoleon's mastery in mass-scale warfare required innovation in all areas: recruiting, organization, combined arms effects, maneuver, sustainment, command and control, the advent of the corps, and the use of battles and campaign to achieve strategic objectives.³⁸

How is Napoleonic operational art relevant to a discussion on modern day special operations? Napoleon's battlefield tactics may well be an outdated field of study, but his conduct of European land warfare from 1799 to 1815 provided the principle subject of study for the enduring theories of Baron Antoine de Jomini (1779-1869) and Carl Von Clausewitz (1780-1831).³⁹ Jominian and Clausewitzian theories remain the intellectual and doctrinal underpinning of modern US military theory and education.⁴⁰ Clausewitz's strategic logic and tactical principles

³⁷The Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, is among those who might dispute Napoleon's rank as a top operational artist. Wellington is reported to have labeled Napoleon as a "butcher." Author visit and tour to Waterloo, Belgium, October 2012.

³⁸Carl Von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 1832. Translated, edited and published as *On War* by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1976). *On War* is replete with references, analysis, praise and criticism for Napoleonic campaigns. Much of the tactical discussions, now considered outdated, involve the French application of the corps, logistics, reserves, command and control and other tactical operating systems and concepts. Books Five to Seven, 279 – 566.

³⁹Clausewitz, *On War*. Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, *Precis de l'Art de Guerre*, 1838. Translated in 1862 by J.B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia as *The Art of War*. Edited and published in 1992 with an introduction by Charles Messenger (London: Lionel Leventhal Limited, 1992).

⁴⁰Christopher Bassford, "Clausewitz and His Works" courseware of the US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks in 1996 and last updated September 23, 2012. Originally published as chapter 2 of *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994),

and Jomini's concept of lines of operation and decisive points—derived from extensive studies of Napoleon's campaigns—remain firmly rooted in the US Army and joint land warfare doctrinal and design principles.⁴¹

These early manifestations of operational art were inspired by the theories of annihilation (total destruction of one's enemy) and attrition (overwhelming mass at a decisive place and time). The conduct of warfare has made generational leaps in its violent expressions since the early 19th century. While the character of warfare continues to change, remarkably, the Napoleonic elements of operational art have endured.

Western operational art further evolved with Prussian Field Marshall Helmuth von Moltke (1800-1891). Historian Michael Krause credits von Moltke's genius as reconciling the debates of "short versus long war, defense versus offense, attrition versus maneuver" within a technologically advancing society introducing advanced weaponry, expansive railroads, and improved communications methods.⁴² The ascension of Prussian state and military prowess in the late 19th century is due in large part to the strategic and doctrinal vision of von Moltke. If Napoleon and von Moltke set the foundations for operational art, then the First World War (WWI) proved the catastrophic collision of European attrition warfare with modern weaponry.

<http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/Cworks/Works.htm> (accessed on January 13, 2013).

⁴¹The US Army "principles of war" show clear derivation from Clausewitzian principles in *On War*. The principles are mass, objective, speed, security, surprise, maneuver, offensive, unity of command, economy of force, simplicity. Jomini's tactical precepts of lines of operation (interior and exterior), decisive points, and objective points are examples of enduring concepts still in use in US Army and Joint US doctrine and practice. These are listed in US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, February 2008, A-1 to A-4. Strategist Colin Gray analyzes the influence of Jomini and Clausewitz in modern US Army doctrine in *War, Peace and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 15-28.

⁴²Krause and Phillips, 114.

World War I is less a study of operational art than it is a gruesome lesson on the limitation of tactics.⁴³ Tactical acumen—bound by immutable principles, hidebound rules, and vigorous execution—showed the gruesome costs required to achieve strategic objectives.⁴⁴ The Second World War (WWII) superseded this stifled operational art with a maneuver-centric German joint force decisively linking tactical success to broader campaign objectives on multiple fronts.⁴⁵ If German operational art acumen is on display in 1940-1943 by the Third Reich, so too is their strategic overreach. The case of the Third Reich reminds us that when the strategy pillar falters, so too does the skilled application of operational art. Adolph Hitler's outlandish strategic aims undermined his skilled Army and Corps Commanders in achieving feasible campaign objectives.⁴⁶

Modern doctrinal operational design elements (Figure 1) would be quite familiar to Napoleon, Clausewitz, Jomini, von Moltke, and the Allied and Axis generals of WWII.⁴⁷ These thirteen doctrinal elements of operational design show the consistent threads of operational thought, language, and logic of military land power principles over the past 200 years. This consistency attests that modern operational art remains a valid guidepost for large land armies colliding on the field of battle with the singular purpose of destroying one another.

⁴³Brigadier General Gunter R. Roth, "Operational Thought from Schlieffen to Manstein," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, 149-166.

⁴⁴Luttwak, 93-112.

⁴⁵Showalter, Dennis, "Prussian-German Operational Art, 1740-1943" in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35-63.

⁴⁶Showalter, 56-58.

⁴⁷JP 5-0, III-18.

Not all conflict involves fielded military formations intent on the destruction of one another. A separate but related category of work studies irregular warfare.⁴⁸ In these works, the consideration of military operational art is often overshadowed by an analysis of political warfare or “armed politics.” Important works in this category are *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu (500 BC), *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T.E. Lawrence (1935), *On Guerilla Warfare* by Mao Tse-Tung (1937), *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* by Roger Trinquier (1961), *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* by David Galula (1964), *War of the Flea* by Robert Taber (1965) and *From Dictatorship to Democracy* by Gene Sharp (1993). On the whole, these works trend toward theories of exhaustion vice attrition or annihilation.⁴⁹



Figure 1. Elements of Operational Design⁵⁰

Source: Joint Publications 5-0, III-18, Figures III-9

⁴⁸Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2012), 159. Joint doctrine defines irregular warfare as “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s).”

⁴⁹Theories of exhaustion center on protracted, non-decisive methods that erode the will and capacity of an adversary that seeks a decisive outcome. German historian Hans Delbruck (1848 – 1929) is credited with developing theories of exhaustion. Examples of exhaustion theories in practice include strategies by Pericles, George Washington, Mao Tse-tung, Vo Nguyen Giap and the Afghanistan-Pakistan Taliban.

⁵⁰JP 5-0, III-18 -19.

USSOF strategic and tactical precepts gravitate toward these theories and practices rather than those oriented on annihilation or attrition. The majority of irregular warfare studies focus on the application of small units, teams or individual actions that create outsized effects.⁵¹ Often, military actions and the contemplation of military art are examined as adjuncts to political warfare. In this genre, politics, people, and psychology are the primary domains of study with military tactics as a subset of options employed to gain strategic advantages.⁵²

The juxtaposition of regular and irregular warfare literature begs a larger question: are the time-tested, landpower-centric elements of operational art and design still valid for contemporary threats?

The Modern Need for Operational Art

Retired British General and modern war theorist Sir Rupert Smith examines this question by defining operational art in a modern warfare context. “Operational art can be understood in three ways. First, as a free, creative and original expression of the use of force and forces ... Second, in the design of the operation ... Third, in the direction of the operation to its successful conclusion. In large measure, this is an expression of the character and aptitude of the operational commander—the artist.”⁵³ Smith’s characterization of operational art contains an important qualifier critical to examining Phase Zero strategy. He cites the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of exercising operational art where no strategy exists. In a refrain familiar to Hitler’s generals and

⁵¹John Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders and Bandits: How Masters of Irregular Warfare Have Shaped Our World* (Plymouth, UK: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

⁵²Arquilla, *Insurgents, Raiders and Bandits*, xi-13. Arquilla examines irregular warfare in three primary categories: the small unit, guerilla warfare, and terrorism.

⁵³Smith, “Epilogue,” *In the Evolution of Operational Art*, by John Andreas and van Creveld, and Martin Olson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 233.

to students of the Vietnam War, Smith outlines the logic and probability of failure when a strategy is muddled.

When one party has a strategy and the other does not, the tactical acts of whatever side, being common to both, are linked inevitably to the side with the strategy – regardless of outcome. The side with the strategy is able to exercise the operational art and, not least for want of opposition at that level, even turn its tactical failures to its advantage. It is this that gives rise to the observable phenomenon of ‘winning every fight and losing the war.’⁵⁴

In his 2005 book *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, Smith asserts that industrial, state-on-state maneuver war no longer exists. Modern war is “war amongst the people.”⁵⁵ Smith asserts that this paradigm shift confounds our institutions and processes that were designed and optimized for conventional, force-on-force war. Smith further claims that operational art is a casualty of this transition. The foundations upon which military strategies were built have ruptured, altering the certainty of historically sound security solutions. This dissolution of singular threats and conventional opponents further erodes our strategic logic and systems. Smith states that modern war has diluted the feasibility of clear objectives, definable theaters, cohesive command structures, and information control. In this environment, “there is little, if any evidence of the practice of the operational art, or design.”⁵⁶ If Smith’s troubling assertion is true, then the intellectual challenge is clear: identify and understand the modern power paradigm shifts in order to conceptualize and adopt a practice of sound, effective operational art.

⁵⁴Smith, “Epilogue,” 236.

⁵⁵Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, Rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

⁵⁶Smith, “Epilogue,” 241.

Designing Operational Art: Doctrinal Methods⁵⁷

Operational art is conceptualized and created from design, or design-like thinking, that arranges military power to accomplish objectives. Design is both a process and a product using “precise and vague ideas ... systematic and chaotic thinking ... both imaginative thought and mechanical calculation.”⁵⁸ Design is the conceptual thinking that precedes, then guides, detailed planning. US Army doctrine describes design as “a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe complex, ill-structured problems and develop approaches to solve them.”⁵⁹ Army design, now called the Army Design Methodology (ADM), is classified as an iterative approach that frames and reframes problems and environments to achieve conceptual understanding prior to detailed, programmatic planning.

Sir Rupert Smith’s observations of modern strategic challenges are clearly reflected in the decade of conflict labeled the Global War on Terror (2001-2009).⁶⁰ In particular, the Iraq and Afghanistan counterinsurgencies exposed a military culture predisposed to its own organizational strengths and bound by doctrinal constructs ill-suited for irregular conflict. To overcome these propensities, the US Army led the joint force in developing a doctrinal process for design.⁶¹

⁵⁷JP 1-02. Doctrine is defined as the “fundamental principles by which military forces of elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application,” 95.

⁵⁸Bryan Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified* (Oxford: Elsevier Ltd) 2006, 4.

⁵⁹Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, March 2010), 3-1.

⁶⁰Al Kamen, “The End of the Global War on Terror,” *The Washington Post*, 24 March 2009.,http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/23/the_end_of_the_global_war_on_t.html, (accessed 14 January 2013). In 2009, the Obama Administration directed that the Global War on Terror moniker would be replaced with the phrase “Overseas Contingency Operations.”

⁶¹Conceptually, sound design has always been a component of military planning. However, US Army doctrine considered design as an inherent task within the military planning process. In the US Army, the School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) at Fort

Recognizing that structured planning processes too often failed to stimulate creative and critical thinking, the 2010 Army planning Field Manual 5-0, *The Operations Process*, formally incorporated design into the US Army planning process.

Joint doctrine, reflecting US Army doctrinal changes, revised operational art and operational design in the 2011 version of Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*. As discussed early in this section, joint operational art is defined as “the creative thinking used to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and to organize and employ military force.”⁶² The role of operational design (Figure 2)⁶³ is to “support operational art with a general methodology using elements of operational design for understanding the situation and the problem.”⁶⁴ The thirteen elements of operational design are “tools which help the Joint Force Commander (JFC) and staff visualize and describe the broad operational approach.”⁶⁵ In this manner, joint doctrine provides a flexible--yet definable--framework for aligning ways and means to achieve strategic ends.

Leavenworth, KS renewed the centrality of design in Army planning in the 2003-present era as a response to the modern challenges of reconciling strategy, doctrine and counterinsurgency.

⁶²JP 5-0, I-5.

⁶³Insert chart III-2 on page III-3 of JP 5-0.

⁶⁴JP 5-0, III-2.

⁶⁵JP 5-0, III-2.

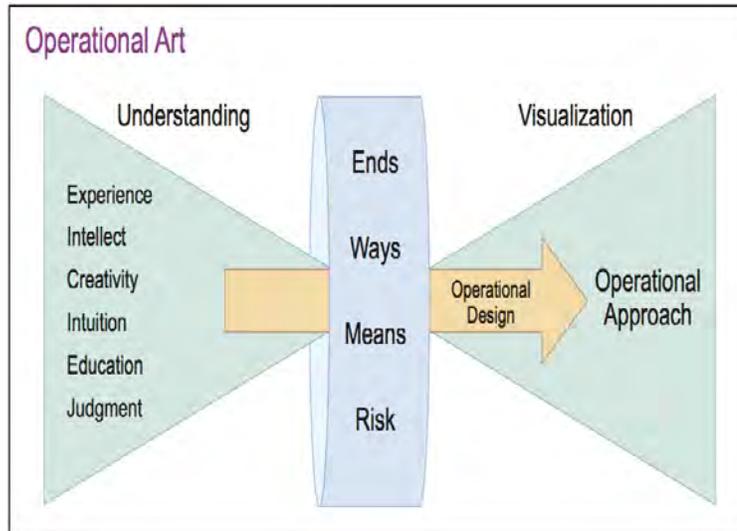


Figure 2. Operational Art⁶⁶

Source: Joint Publication 5-0, III-2, Figure III-1

Operational art, once the domain of major theater commanders, is now recognized as a relevant practice at lower tactical levels. Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, *Operations* (October 2011), defines operational art as “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”⁶⁷ In a clear break from previous doctrine, the Army declared that operational art is not “exclusive to theater and joint force commanders. Instead, it applies to any formation that must effectively arrange multiple tactical actions in time, space and purpose to achieve strategic objectives.”⁶⁸ The Director of the US Army Combined Doctrine Directorate (CADD) at Fort Leavenworth, KS, stated: “One of the breakthroughs in ADP 3-0 (2011) is that operational art can now be applied at any level of war.

⁶⁶JP 5-0, III-2, Figure III-1.

⁶⁷Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, October 2011), 9.

⁶⁸Ibid.

Even at the battalion level, operational art is applied. This was added to Army doctrine principally based on our OIF and OEF experiences.”⁶⁹

The US Army and joint doctrine adapted to modern strategic challenges by pushing operational art down to lower levels and to smaller formations. Notably, there is significant lag time between the intellectual and practical adaptations occurring in the mid-2000s and their formalization in doctrinal publications (2010-2011). However late, both US Army and Joint doctrines inculcated the themes and practices derived from our last decade of operations and produced revised definitions and methods of conceptualizing and applying operational art.

Are these doctrinal changes sufficient to contend with the modern warfare challenges articulated by Sir Rupert Smith? Are doctrinal changes that reflect our Iraq and Afghanistan experiences suitable to contend with the Phase Zero environment?

The evidence suggests that despite durable doctrinal principles and recent doctrinal adjustments, the Phase Zero environment is not suited to the maneuver-centric operational art concepts and culture. The mismatch of the Phase Zero environment and modern doctrinal constructs is analogous to the struggles encountered by US land forces in Iraq and Afghanistan (2001-2006) attempting to conduct counterinsurgency warfare with maneuver-centric doctrinal education and training. Illustrative of this incongruity, Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria II of the US Army War College asserted that the 2006 US Army Field Manual 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, “embraced a second grammar of war.” Echevarria references the Clausewitzian metaphorical distinction that wars have a grammar separate from their logic. Clausewitz states:

War is a branch of political activity; that it is in no sense autonomous ... the only source of war is politics—the intercourse of governments and peoples; but it is apt to be assumed that war suspends that intercourse and replaces it by a wholly different condition, ruled by no law but its own. We maintain, on the contrary, that war is simply a

⁶⁹Clint Ancker, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 29 August 2012.

continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means... Its grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic.⁷⁰

The grammar of war represents the rules that bound the realm of war and warfare: governing principles and syntax separate from its logic. The pull of grammar becomes the dominant reference for framing military operations. When this occurs, doctrine becomes the grammar.⁷¹ Echevarria describes the potential insufficiencies when well-rehearsed doctrines confront ill-defined problems. “Military commanders have been substituting rules and principles literally for centuries whenever they found the twists and turns of logic too difficult to follow.”⁷²

In Clausewitzian terms, the thirteen elements of operational design serve as a type of grammar to create operational approaches. Notably, these thirteen elements remain intellectually associated to the land warfare principles of the Napoleonic and von Moltke eras. If understanding counterinsurgency required a second grammar of war as Echevarria states, then a proper understanding of Phase Zero may also require amended grammar.

Operational Art: Modern Demands

Operational art is routinely tied to the movement of large formations and the conduct of grand scale campaigns and decisive battles. Modern security challenges that require this type of operational art are increasingly replaced with irregular threats, ill-defined conflict parameters, and multi-dimensional battle arenas. Current operational art paradigms were not created for this environment. Predictably, this makes our planning doctrine less useful and at times,

⁷⁰Clausewitz, *On War*, 605.

⁷¹JP 1-02. Doctrine is “fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application,” 90.

⁷²Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria II, “War’s Second Grammar,” Strategic Studies Institute, October 2009, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB946.pdf>. Accessed on 12 November 2012.

counterproductive. New security environments demand new configurations of operational art and design.

While operational art may lag in adapting to security challenges, it is not static. The recent shifts in US Army and joint doctrine show the institutional contemplation of operational art in a changing strategic environment. If operational art is to be useful construct, it should develop a corollary for distributed, specialized operations conducted against non-state, networked threats. In addition to the threat, emerging US power projection methods, such as special operations, must be understood and accounted for in devising new operational constructs. Such manifestations of modern power—smaller in scale but not in intensity or effect—require consideration for their different expressions of operational art.

Finally, operational art becomes difficult to frame in a modern warfare environment where the principle task is not necessarily the destruction of a state’s military apparatus. The modern strategic environment has ill-defined pillars with which to design, vector, and execute cohesive operational art. The challenge of devising operational art is inextricably linked to the larger challenge of identifying threats, the boundaries of a security environment, and managing the complexities of modern power paradigms.

Understanding Special Operations

Defining Special Operations

Special operations are officially defined as “operations requiring unique modes of employment, tactical techniques, equipment and training often conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and characterized by the following: time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility, conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise

and/or a high degree of risk.”⁷³ Special operations are conducted by special operations forces as designated by Title 10 U.S. Code, Section 167. One of nine combatant commands, USSOCOM characterizes joint SOF by the following traits: precision and scalable strike effects; ubiquitous access; regional expertise, presence and influence; C4ISR dominance; agile and unconventional logistics; force protection and survivability.⁷⁴

USSOCOM is a unified combatant command with service-like responsibilities to resource, train, equip and employ joint SOF. In 2005, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) appointed USSOCOM as the Department of Defense lead for “planning, synchronizing and, as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks.”⁷⁵ Now in its 25th year of existence, USSOCOM currently fields over 60,000 joint SOF personnel. USSOCOM comprises 4 percent of Department of Defense personnel and 1 percent of its budget.⁷⁶ By way of comparison, the United Kingdom, arguably our greatest and most capable global ally, will field a British active army totaling 82,000 soldiers by 2018.⁷⁷

Special operations are predominately joint. The core joint task forces for special operations are the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), Joint Military Information Support Task Force (JMISTF) and Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (JCMOTF). A Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command (JFSOCC) is normally established to

⁷³Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 288.

⁷⁴*Special Operations Forces Reference Manual*, Third Edition (MacDill Air Force Base, Florida: Joint Special Operations University Press) 2011, 1-4. C4ISR stands for command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

⁷⁵JP 5-0, II-26.

⁷⁶Admiral William H. McRaven, *USSOCOM Posture Statement* before the 112th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 6 March 2012.

⁷⁷United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, “Strategic Defence and Security Review 2020,” (19 October 2010), <http://www.army.mod.uk/news/24264.aspx> (accessed on 26 September, 2012).

command and control multiple joint SOF task forces.⁷⁸ Special operations core operations and activities are derived from law, joint doctrine, and USSOCOM Commander directives (Figure 3).⁷⁹

Historically, Department of Defense (DoD) counterterror and hostage rescue missions were conducted by ad hoc units that were built for specific missions. This method persisted until the tactical and strategic failure of OPERATION EAGLE CLAW, the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran in 1980. Following the aborted mission, Congress ordered an investigation on the concept and execution of the mission. The commission, led by Retired Navy Admiral James Holloway III, consisted of a non-partisan board of retired general and flag officers. The Holloway Commission cited the ad hoc assemblage and poor joint interoperability of the hostage rescue team as the proximate cause of mission failure.⁸⁰ The report recommended the creation of a standing special operations joint task force singularly devoted to counter terrorism and hostage rescue. Strategically, the Holloway Commission validated the requirement for a standing joint SOF task force devoted to high-risk, direct action missions. The report resulted in creation of a standing, professionalized SOF counterterror and hostage rescue capability and laid the foundation for a consolidated SOF command. It would take seven more years after the Holloway report—and other incidents of poor joint interoperability—until the legislative establishment of a strategic SOF headquarters, USSOCOM.⁸¹

⁷⁸Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Reference Manual*, 3rd Edition, (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2011), 2-22 to 2-29.

⁷⁹Ibid., I-6 chart.

⁸⁰Admiral James L. Holloway III, *Iran Hostage Rescue Mission Report (Unclassified)*,” Statement of Admiral J. L. Holloway III, USN (Ret.), Chairman, Special Operations Review Group (Washington DC: The Navy Department Library, 23 August 1980), <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/hollowayrpt.htm>, (accessed 14 January 2013).

⁸¹United States Congress, “Public Law 99-433-1 October 1986, The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.”

The 1987 Nunn-Cohen amendment to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols act legislatively mandated a separate US special operations capability and headquarters. This formalized USSOCOM in Tampa, Florida as the consolidated special operations command. To ensure accountability and oversight, USSOCOM has specific reporting responsibilities to US Congress.

Special Operations Theory and Doctrine

Special operations lack a single, cohesive theory that describes special operations power, strategic purpose, domain relevance, and national requirement.⁸² While there is a growing body of literature and strategic contemplation of special operations, a comprehensive theory has yet to emerge. Strategist Colin Gray observes that “although there is an abundance of literature on the unconventional derring-do of SOF, discussion of their strategic value is all but nonexistent. That is a story much in need of telling, particularly since SOF assuredly will figure with increasing prominence in the strategic history of warfare.”⁸³

The SOF community has recognized that the mere articulation of SOF capabilities is insufficient to inculcate special operations into US strategic thinking. Lacking a recognized theoretical expression, special operations approaches, methods, and options are too often viewed as adjuncts to more traditional forms of power (air, land, maritime). Often, special operations *are* mere adjuncts to other forms of power. However, this perspective overlooks special operations as an alternative option for projecting power across multiple domains or in domain gaps, where political, social, or physical risk calculations require distinct approaches.

⁸²The author reviewed two as-yet unpublished manuscripts written by COL (Ret.) Celeski in 2011-12. The first is titled “Political Warfare.” The second, “Special Operations Theory and Power,” is currently in draft form at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Press at Tampa, FL. COL (Ret.) Celeski used these manuscripts as the lead-in to professional discussions and professional development programs conducted at the Command and General Staff College (CGSC), Fort Leavenworth, KS in February - March 2011.

⁸³Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 252.

In 1993, a Navy SEAL Commander named William H. McRaven developed a theory of SOF direct action operations. McRaven, now an Admiral commanding USSOCOM, argued that a small, specialized force achieving surprise could achieve “relative superiority.”⁸⁴ This tactical accomplishment, combined with the proper strategic application, can achieve strategic objectives normally associated with major campaigns or large military formations. Admiral McRaven’s theory for commando-style raids has persisted as the fundamental theoretical touchstone for direct-action focused USSOF units. Indeed, McRaven’s theory has nurtured a generation of counterterrorism methods, doctrine, training, and education that is executed by a globally oriented US-led counterterrorism force. Beyond McRaven’s direct-action theory lies a greater theoretical challenge: developing a theory that accounts for SOF’s direct *and* indirect approaches.

COL (Ret.) Joseph Celeski, responding to the need to develop and articulate special operations theory and power, energized the discourse through USSOCOM-sponsored working groups, discussions and writings.⁸⁵ Celeski’s draft work, *Special Operations Theory and Power*, adds theoretical components to the articulation of SOF doctrine and application.

Special operations are those activities of unorthodox nature applied to increase the ‘fog and friction of war’ on our adversaries (a form of political warfare – Special Operations Forces medium); if applied correctly, they can achieve strategic effects in the arena of grand strategy, independent of operational art associated with campaign plans and objectives. In military campaigns, these actions are applied in cooperation with conventional force maneuver (or its inverse, conventional forces supporting SOF maneuver) to achieve military objectives. Outside of war, special operations activities are becoming more important in shaping environments for deterrence of potential adversaries and cooperating with our allies as a primary diplomatic and foreign policy tool of the United States.⁸⁶

⁸⁴William H. McRaven, *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare--Theory and Practice* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995). Of note, Clausewitz discusses the concept of “relative superiority” in Book Three, Chapter Eight of *On War*, 197.

⁸⁵Celeski, unpublished manuscripts and professional discussions.

⁸⁶Celeski, *Special Operations Theory and Power* (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2013), manuscript in review.

In Celeski's analyses, special operations is theoretically analyzed across all domains (horizontally) and across the strategic-operational-tactical spectrum (vertically). This approach reveals two key challenges for the formulation of a special operations theory. The first challenge is identifying special operations in relation to a domain. The second challenge is reconciling—within one theory—the two opposing natures of special operations: indirect and direct.

Domains are the cognitive categories that frame expressions of military power. The Department of Defense recognizes five domains: air, land, maritime, space, and cyber.⁸⁷ Accordingly, forces and capabilities are defined by their utility in influencing, controlling, or dominating a recognized domain. The domain paradigm provides clear expressions for land forces (land), air forces (air), and naval forces (maritime). Where do special operations fall into the domain paradigm?

Special operations are considered cross-domain, multi-domain, or best suited to operate in domain gaps. Unlike airpower, land power, and sea power, special operations are generally not designed to dominate a domain. Rather, SOF seek to create advantages within domains by generating or reducing frictions. SOF can exploit or counter adversary actions in domain gaps.⁸⁸ However untidy this description may be, it reflects the complex strategic environment in which SOF are uniquely suited to operate: nebulous domain seams and sensitive locales. Recent scholarship from USASOC promotes the idea that SOF operate in an as-yet unrecognized domain: the human domain.⁸⁹ The human domain represents an emerging concept that defies

⁸⁷JP 5-0, xx.

⁸⁸Celeski, conversation with author in March 2012. Permission granted for use.

⁸⁹USASOC introduced the term 'human domain' in the 2012 draft of Army Doctrinal Publication 3-05, *Army Special Operations*. On 15 May 2012, the Doctrine 2015 General Officer Review Board delayed the inclusion of the term in Doctrine 2015 publications to allow for the further development and consideration of the idea. Major General Bennet S. Sacolick and Brigadier Wayne W. Grigsby Jr., "Special Operations/Conventional Force Interdependence: A Critical Role in 'Prevent, Shape, Win,'" *Army Magazine* 62, no. 6 (June 2012), 39-42.

simple categorization but merits consideration as we adjust the paradigm of modern military power projection.⁹⁰

Instead of the domain quandary inhibiting the understanding of special operations, the opposite logic must be considered: domains may be inadequate paradigms to frame our conceptualization and projection of power. If so, the strategic utility of SOF is not the question. Instead, we must reconsider our view of domains as a useful expression of national power. The Arab Spring and social media revolutions in 2011 are recent examples where existing domain paradigms fell short in categorizing citizen-centric, social media-enabled power schemes that toppled longstanding regimes in the Middle East and North Africa.

The second challenge in formulating a special operations theory is the dual nature of special operations. Often called “direct and indirect,” these capabilities range from the shock power of specialized counterterrorism raids to hidden-hand psychological influence operations oriented toward cognitive targets. With such a disparate range of methods, combining special operations into a single paradigm becomes problematic.

To improve the strategic understanding of special operations, USASOC introduced revised doctrinal language with a clear declaration of special operations dualism. Issued in August 2012, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, describes special operations in two distinct categories: special warfare and surgical strike.

Special warfare is the execution of activities that involve a combination of lethal and nonlethal actions taken by a specially trained and educated force that has a deep understanding of cultures and foreign language, proficiency in small-unit tactics, and the ability to build and fight alongside indigenous combat formations in a permissive, uncertain, or hostile environment. Special warfare is an umbrella term that represents special operations forces conducting combinations of unconventional warfare, foreign

⁹⁰US Department of the Army, Headquarters, TRADOC PAM 525-3-0, *The Army Capstone Concept, 19 December 2012* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2012). The concept states “current doctrine does not adequately address the moral, social, cognitive, and physical aspects of human populations in conflict,” 15.

internal defense and/or counterinsurgency through and with indigenous forces or personnel in politically sensitive and/or hostile environments.⁹¹

Special warfare represents the classically “by, through, and with” special operations missions most often associated with US Army Special Forces. The psychological and civil affairs components--the nonlethal actions--that typify SOF indirect approaches are also categorized as applications of special warfare. Surgical strike represents the special operations capability most known as direct-action raids, hostage rescue or other deep penetration, high-risk operations.

Surgical strike is the execution of activities in a precise manner that employ special operations forces in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover or damage designated targets, or influence threats. Executed unilaterally or collaboratively, surgical strike extends operational reach and influence by engaging global targets discriminately and precisely. Surgical strike is not always intended to be an isolated activity; it is executed to shape the operational environment or influence select target audiences in support of larger strategic interests.⁹²

Special warfare and surgical strike represent SOF expressions and options for the broader, joint, operational approaches described as direct and indirect approaches.⁹³ The codification of SOF dualism, new to ARSOF doctrine, is currently under consideration for joint SOF doctrine.⁹⁴ This paradigm attempts a practical and useful construct to explain the purpose and essence of special operations, without losing the nuances inherent in each approach. As with most doctrinal concepts that are sharply defined, there are drawbacks. The term special warfare is a questionable descriptor of the non-warfare activities undertaken by USSOF. Special

⁹¹US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, October 2011), 9.

⁹²ADP 3-05, *Special Operations*, 10.

⁹³JP 5-0, “The approach is the manner in which a commander contends with a center of gravity (CoG). A direct approach attacks an enemy’s CoG or principal strength by applying power directly against it ... A indirect approach attacks the enemy’s CoG by applying combat power against a series of decisive points that lead to the defeat of the CoG while avoiding enemy strength,” III-31 to III-32.

⁹⁴Author visit to USSOCOM, December 2012.

warfare connotes a martial approach which is, in many cases, the very antithesis of the actual USSOF approach employed.

Army Doctrinal Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, also explains special operations in relation to the US Army land power doctrinal construct of Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. Though no single theory of special operations is widely accepted, the strategic utility of special operations, in both direct and indirect approaches, has an appreciable body of history, theory, doctrine and practice to consider revised operational art constructs.

Summary

Special operations, in spirit and principle, are relatively unchanged from the trojan horse ruse employed by the Greeks 2,500 ago. The daring Greek operation, as described by Virgil in *The Aeneid*, included elevated risk, unconventional methods, specially selected personnel, stealth by smallness, clandestine infiltration, psychological surprise, and irregular modes of attack. The post WWII-era of modern special operations illustrates a force adapting to address capability shortfalls and domain gaps with highly specialized, low-density skills. Since WWII, special operations have developed an organizational essence defined by its theory, doctrine, capabilities, culture, and strategic application. The last twelve years have witnessed tremendous growth in special operations missions, force structure, tactical prowess, and operational utility.⁹⁵ This trajectory of modern special operations provides context useful to conceptualizing new applications of special operations in Phase Zero environments.

⁹⁵Since 11 September 2001, USSOCOM has doubled in size from 30,000 service personnel to nearly 67,000 today. In the same period, the budget more than quadrupled from \$2.2 billion in 2001 to over \$10.5 billion in 2012.

Understanding Phase Zero

This section provides definitions, histories, theories, and modern environment of Phase Zero. Combining all steady-state military actions under the rubric of “Phase Zero” risks framing all US foreign security affairs solely through a martial lens. This section attempts to avoid this trap by equally examining the diplomatic and military aspects of pre-crisis environments.

Definition of Phase Zero

Phase Zero is the slang descriptor for both the actions taken and the environment involved in maintaining US access and influence through foreign engagements with means and methods below the threshold of war.⁹⁶ Phase Zero is the first phase of the joint doctrine phasing model for operations.⁹⁷ The six joint phases are shaping (phase 0), deter (phase I), seize the initiative (phase II), dominate (phase III), stabilize (phase IV), and enable civil authority (phase V).⁹⁸ To preserve flexibility in operational design, joint doctrine states, “the six-phase model is not intended to be a universally prescriptive template for all conceivable joint operations and may be tailored to the character and duration of the operation to which it applies” (Figure 4).⁹⁹ The doctrine specifies that “operations and activities in the *shape* phase normally are outlined in Theater Campaign Plans (TCPs) and those in the remaining phases are outlined in Joint Strategic-

⁹⁶Author definition. Phase 0 (Shape) has a joint doctrinal definition derived from the joint phasing model. The shift from “Phase 0” to “Phase Zero” in this study connotes a stand-alone description of activities that occur in a peacetime environment and not solely as a “preparation” phase for joint operations. Joint doctrine is flexible on the phasing and is not prescriptive about following chronological phases.

⁹⁷JP 5-0, III-42. The definition is as follows: “Shape (Phase 0). Joint and multinational operations--inclusive of normal and routine military activities- and various interagency activities are performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assume or solidify relationships with friends and allies.”

⁹⁸Ibid., III-38.

⁹⁹JP 5-0, III-41.

Capabilities Plan (JSCP) directed contingency plans.”¹⁰⁰ Joint doctrine makes a critical distinction by separating *shape* (in Phase Zero) as principally directed by Theater Campaign Plans while the remaining five phases are directed by contingency (wartime) plans.¹⁰¹ This distinction gives Phase Zero clear properties that are related to, but separate from, pure military contingency or wartime operations.

Shape is doctrinally defined as “joint and multinational operations—inclusive of normal and routine military activities—and various interagency activities performed to dissuade or deter potential adversaries and to assure or solidify relationships with friends and allies.”¹⁰² Joint doctrine combines the verb, *shape*, with the phase, *0*: Shape (Phase 0). Though incorporated into one term, *shape* is clearly the principle activity with *phase 0* in parenthesis to denote the chronological phasing scheme. To provide clarity, this monograph adopts the standard colloquialism of Phase Zero in place of *shape* to prevent confusion about shaping operations, which take many forms and occur in all phases. Throughout this study, *Phase Zero* is the rubric used to describe both the actions (engagement, diplomacy) and the environment (pre-crisis, peacetime). Phase Zero operations, actions and activities describe military engagements *not* in a wartime environment or “left of the Joint Task Force.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Ibid., III-42.

¹⁰¹The word “principally” is used here because joint doctrine state that “While most shaping activities are contained in the TCP, contingency plans may include shaping activities that must be accomplished to support an operation.” JP 5-0, III-42. In this case, Theater Campaign Plans (TCPs) describe Phase Zero operations, actions and activities and contingency plans represent staffed, approved and reasonably rehearsed wartime military contingency operations.

¹⁰²JP 5-0, xxiii.

¹⁰³US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), unclassified command brief (power point), June 2012.

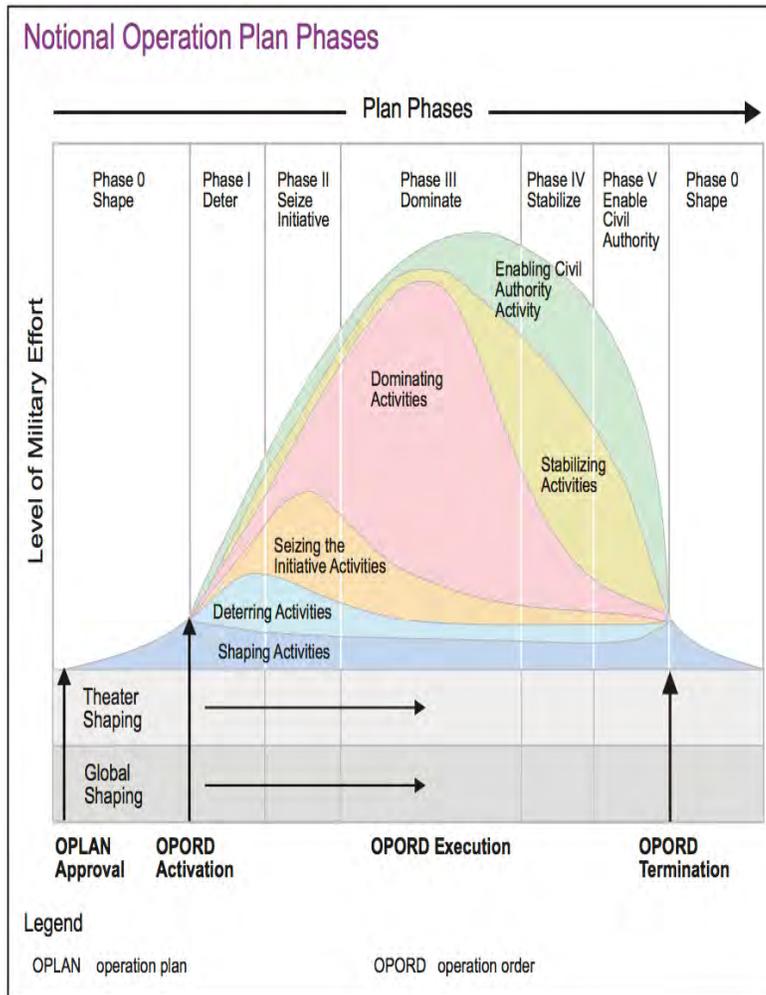


Figure 3. Notional Operation Plan Phases¹⁰⁴

Source: Joint Publication 5-0, III-39, Figure III-16

In the peacetime environment of Phase Zero, diplomacy is the lead discipline for US interests. The lead agency for the US is the Department of State. Phase Zero military affairs, however robust, should occur within the diplomatic frameworks and operating parameters set by Department of State. Diplomacy is “the conduct of international relations by negotiation rather than by force, propaganda, or recourse to law, and by other peaceful means (such as gathering

¹⁰⁴ JP 5-0, III-39, Figure III-16

information or promoting goodwill) which are either directly or indirectly designed to promote negotiation.”¹⁰⁵ Diplomacy aims to achieve national policy by employing dialogue, negotiation, custom, law, and other methods of statecraft: a perpetual continuum of lawful statesmanship and civil discourse. Culturally and programmatically, the US Department of State does not use a strict phasing construct for their activities. In effect, all diplomatic relations with nations occur in a Phase Zero environment until such time as the hostilities escalate requiring more intrusive actions (Phase I, deter) or deliberate combat (Phase II/III, seize the initiative/dominate).

Historical Development of Phase Zero

Following WWII, the US adopted the Unified Command Plan (UCP) structure to designate regional responsibilities and authorities for US global engagement.¹⁰⁶ The UCP method enabled geographic combatant commanders (GCCs) to conduct steady-state military-to-military engagements in pursuit of sustained relational contact with adversaries, friends, and allies.

Under the UCP construct, military shaping activities fell into two categories: preparation activities in support of major (wartime) contingency plans and military engagements conducted for the purposes of sustaining influence, relations, and access to countries deemed critical to national interests. The strategic focus of the military remained the first category: a force designed for decisive combat operations against foreign military forces.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, (Hertfordshire, UK: Prentice Hall), 1995, 1.

¹⁰⁶Ronald H. Cole, Walter S. Poole, James F. Schnabel, Robert J. Watson, and Willard J. Webb, *The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946-1993* (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 1995).

¹⁰⁷Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George W. Bush* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 2005), 52-118. Herspring’s examination of civil-military relations in the Truman and Eisenhower eras provides the political backdrop to the formation and debate of the post WWII US armed forces purpose and composition. The US force structure was oriented on large scale, decisive conventional operations against a peer or near-peer competitor.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy initiated a shift in strategy to small wars and sustained influence engagements. This was a marked shift from the conventional focus of US military leadership.¹⁰⁸ This shift was codified in the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) that legislated a new foreign assistance program structure and process.¹⁰⁹ The 1961 FAA created the dual engagement strategy of military and non-military aid, enabling US limited war methods to stop Soviet communist expansion. The FAA created the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to carry out the development and aid missions. Military aid to foreign nations (labeled “security assistance”) was controlled and funded by the Department of State. The Department of State was responsible for administering the security assistance programs.¹¹⁰ Concomitant to the 1961 FAA, the Kennedy Administration championed and expanded US Army Special Forces as the military force ideally suited to combat communist insurgencies.¹¹¹ US Army Special Forces, as a combat force and with a distinct operational approach, reached a high water mark of influence under the Kennedy administration. Following the Vietnam War, successive presidential administrations and national security emphases became focused on major theater nuclear war and conventional conflict, principally in Europe.¹¹² This security environment

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 140-143.

¹⁰⁹Committee on International Relations and Committee on Foreign Relations, *Legislation on Foreign Relations Through 2002* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2003), <http://transition.usaid.gov/policy/ads/faa.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2012). Current legislation and related executive orders.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Video: “JFK on Special Forces” June 6, 1962 address to the United States Military Academy graduating class, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FVrpiG7haE>. Accessed on November 12, 2012. Department of the Army, “Army Activities in Underdeveloped Areas Short of Declared War,” 1961. Paddock, 33.

¹¹²Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1942-1976* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006), 477-495.

characterized the Cold War period from the US withdrawal from Vietnam War (1973) up to the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991).¹¹³

The post Cold War world demanded new security concepts, approaches and posture. The 1995 National Security Strategy subtitled, “A Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement” codified the use of peacetime engagement as one of three lines of effort (peacetime engagement, deterrence and conflict prevention, fight and win) to achieve US strategic objectives.¹¹⁴ During the next ten years (1995-2005), the naming conventions for theater engagements shifted in name but not intent. The names include *Theater Engagement Planning* (1998), *Theater Cooperation* (2005), and the current moniker, *Security Cooperation*.¹¹⁵

Following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld added a new dimension to engagement:

Secretary Rumsfeld has directed his combatant commanders and others in the Department to move beyond the relatively unfocused practice of “engagement” – which sometimes amounted to little more than “showing the flag” abroad – and toward a more specific and practical set of goals to lay the foundation for our partners working with us in defense endeavors in the future.¹¹⁶

For the armed forces, this directive forced a recalculation of all aspects of engagement: countries, regions, partners, duration, frequency, authorities, and outcomes. Rumsfeld’s directive generated the impetus to operationalize engagement with a clear focus on terror threats. His guidance expanded engagement beyond its original dual purpose of setting the theater for the

¹¹³Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 542-587.

¹¹⁴The White House, US, “A National Security Strategy for Engagement and Enlargement,” 1995.

¹¹⁵US Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5132.03, 24 OCT 2008. Prior names are found in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) 3113.01A, 1998.

¹¹⁶Douglas J. Feith, Transformation and Security Cooperation, remarks by Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith, Washington DC, September 8, 2004 available at <http://defenselink.mil/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=145>, accessed on 12 November 2012.

introduction of large, conventional Army forces and to project US presence abroad. Consistent with the offensive-spirited Global War on Terror (GWOT), Rumsfeld's directive began the shift to more muscular and synchronized engagements with improved strategic links among intelligence, threats, foreign capabilities, and other overseas activities.¹¹⁷

Rumsfeld's concept, however visionary, met with a web of legal, authoritative, funding, and resourcing challenges.¹¹⁸ Achieving Rumsfeld's idealized Phase Zero engagements required significant and controversial legislative and structural revisions. Few revisions were implemented.¹¹⁹ In late 2004, the US national security challenge of integrating the interagency in Phase Zero countries was an important, but clearly secondary effort. During this period the US was grappling with bigger problems in a different phase: Phase Four (stability) in Iraq and to a lesser extent, Afghanistan.

The increasingly costly and ineffective US war effort in Iraq in 2004-2005 revealed that the US military and civil service were poorly prepared to conduct large-scale stability operations.¹²⁰ To address this shortcoming, the Bush Administration issued National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization* (7 December 2005). In the same week (28 November 2005), the Department of Defense issued Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.05, *Military*

¹¹⁷*Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign: A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations*, United States Senate, Richard Lugar, Chairman, 109th Congress (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 15 December 2006), 18.

¹¹⁸Project for National Security Reform, "Ensuring Security in an Unpredictable World: The Urgent Need for National Security Reform," report, July 2008, www.pnsr.org (accessed January 15, 2013).

¹¹⁹*Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign*, 1-18.

¹²⁰Tom Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). By using this excellent journalistic perspective, many official government and private media accounts details the US' insufficiencies in contending with a growing counterinsurgency in Iraq.

Support for Stability, Security Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations, directing that stability operations are “a core US military mission.”¹²¹ These directives provided a clear mandate: the major intellectual, legislative, and resource energies of the US government were to be focused on stability operations. In this environment, US government policies and resources focused on *post-war* issues under the catch-all title of counterinsurgency (COIN). This focus left a smaller national effort dedicated to *pre-war* or *non-war* shaping activities and operations in Phase Zero. While a cottage industry grew around counterinsurgency, the troubleshooting of Phase Zero problems was largely ignored by Washington DC except at the individual embassy level.¹²²

Phase Zero: Modern Application

Phase Zero operations, actions and activities are defined by creative, bottom-up innovations and deliberate, top-down processes. The 2006 and 2010 National Security Strategies and the Global War on Terror (2001-2009) were the significant drivers for the Departments of State and Defense and USAID to more effectively synchronize diplomacy, defense, and development (3Ds). Cognizant of their diverging organizational cultures, peculiar professional languages, and interoperability challenges, the three agencies forged improved cooperation through collaborative forums, regional programs, and country-specific synchronization. A decade (2001-2011) of interoperability and synchronization lessons are showing through in professional discourse and practical guides. Such works include the *Civil Military Operations Guide*, the *Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework*, and the *3D Planning Guide: Diplomacy*,

¹²¹US Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 3000.5, 28 NOV 2005, USD (P), *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*.

¹²²*Embassies as Command Posts in the Anti-Terror Campaign*, 1-18.

*Development and Defense.*¹²³ These type of tools attempt to “build understanding and synchronize plans to improve collaboration, coordination and unity of effort to achieve the coherence needed to preserve and advance US national interests.”¹²⁴ These initiatives are formalizing what has been routinely practiced by astute Phase Zero practitioners: translating, understanding and integrating the programs, processes, and goals of other agencies into one’s own plans and programs to achieve a synchronized effect.

The Department of Defense Phase Zero Framework

The Department of Defense Phase Zero construct is the Theater Campaign Plan (TCP). “Theater and Global Campaign Plans are the centerpiece of DoD’s planning construct. They provide the means to translate combatant command theater or functional strategies into executable plans.”¹²⁵ Combatant Commands design TCPs to orient, integrate, and prioritize resource allocation and operational focus in their region.

Whereas the TCPs are regional (combatant command) synchronizing tools, DoD concurrently employs a Global Campaign Plan construct. Global Campaign Plans coordinate security issues that exceed the authority or capability of a single combatant commander. Global Campaign Plans are currently active in the realms of cyber, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism.¹²⁶ USSOCOM is the lead combatant command for combating global terror

¹²³US Agency for International Development, “Civil Military Operations Guide,” Version 2.3 (Draft) February 2012. US Department of State, *Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework*, July 2008, Department of States, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/187786.pdf> (accessed 14 January 2013). *3D Planning Guide: Diplomacy, Defense, Development*, 15 August 2011, Pre-decisional working copy in draft led by the US Agency for International Development. This draft may be superseded by the “Civil Military Operations Guide.”

¹²⁴3D Planning Guide, 4.

¹²⁵JP 5-0, xvii.

¹²⁶JP 5-0, II-25.

networks.¹²⁷ Central to the execution of Global Campaign Plans is the ability to see and act across regional boundaries in order to understand, interdict, or disrupt globally agile threats.¹²⁸

The art and science of implementing the Rumsfeldian notion of improved military engagement in concert with other forms of national power has been labeled as “operationalizing” theater security cooperation.¹²⁹ *Security cooperation* is an umbrella term to describe nearly all military activities undertaken in Phase Zero. Security cooperation is defined as:

Activities undertaken by DoD to encourage and enable partners to work with the United States to achieve strategic objectives. It includes all DoD interaction with foreign defense and security establishments, including all DoD-administered security assistance programs, that: build defense and security relationships that promote specific US security interests, including all international armaments cooperation activities and security assistance activities; develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations; and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to host nations.¹³⁰

TCPs, while directive and authoritative, are framework documents communicating the strategic narrative, prioritizing resources, and inspiring long-term, programmatic thinking by the executing services and agencies.¹³¹ The actual operational design of TCP implementation occurs at lower echelons. This process decentralizes the tactical and operational design to the executing service component commands, joint task forces, joint interagency task forces, or sub-unified commands. In terms of operational art, the combatant command establishes the strategic

¹²⁷ Admiral William H. McRaven, *USSOCOM Posture Statement* before the 112th Congress, Senate Armed Services Committee, 6 March 2012, 22 pages.

¹²⁸ JP 5-0, II-25.

¹²⁹ Charles F. Wald, “New Thinking at USEUCOM: The Phase Zero Campaign,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 43, 4th quarter 2006, 72-73.

¹³⁰ US Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5132.03, 24 OCT 2008.

¹³¹ US Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, *Theater Campaign Planning: Planner’s Handbook*, February 2012, Version 1.0 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office), 1.

objectives, resource allocation, and regional forums as the broad guidance for decentralized, detailed implementing operations.

For USSOF, the operational-level application of critical and creative thinking to achieve these objectives occurs at the TSOC. The TSOC is the central Phase Zero operational art headquarters that then sets the framework (posture, programs, exercises, regional forums, engagements) for the tactical execution required to link tactics to strategy.

The TCP applies the logic of conventional operational art with one important difference: instead of arranging battles to win a war, the TCP arranges engagements to sustain the peace. While battles are narrowly defined as two combatants tactically engaged in a lethal fight, engagements have no such parameters. Engagements include nearly all forms of contact *short of* battles: exercises, foreign military sales, joint combined exchange training, professional schooling, port visits, counter-narcotics training, civil projects, international officer exchange education and training programs, conferences, and media events. Authorities and programs used in Phase Zero include Title 10, Title 22, Title 32, Section 1206, 1208, 1210, counter-narcotics, military-to-military programs, and all forms of security assistance (twelve programs total including Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Engagement Training (IMET), and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)).¹³² TCPs are “iterative and often cobble together the various types of resources into a coherent, actionable plan.”¹³³

At the combatant command level, the special operations contribution in Phase Zero is broadly characterized as a *shape* and *deter* function. Special operations joint doctrine states the role of SOF in Phase Zero:

Use of SOF and SO, concurrent with CF capabilities in military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities help shape the operational environment

¹³²US Department of Defense, *Planner's Handbook*, 16.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 2.

and keep the day-to-day tensions between nations or groups below the threshold of armed conflict, which serves to maintain US global influence.¹³⁴

While these definitions provide clear guidance, the modern application of special operations Phase Zero operations is less simple. SOF Phase Zero ranges from routine peacetime engagements (Nepal, Romania) to publicly acknowledged but sensitive, intrusive operations (Colombia, Yemen, Philippines). The employment of special operations in foreign environments often contains complicated caveats, blurred distinctions of police and military roles, lawless conflict zones and politically charged environments. New technologies such as drones have further complicated Phase Zero with intrusive collection and interdiction options with disputed legal parameters. As a result, Phase Zero is not a fixed category; it has shifting boundaries and blurred edges commensurate with its changing environment. The rise of non-state threats and slow-boiling, low-intensity conflicts has raised important questions: what types of US activities occur in Phase Zero? To what purpose and at what risk?

This growing ambition of what can be accomplished in Phase Zero comes from directed guidance and self-generated aspirations for what can and should be accomplished prior to crisis, or in terminology of SOF leadership, “left of the bang.”¹³⁵ While military operations can be quickened and expanded quickly, policies often cannot. Thus, Phase Zero special operations that stretch policy parameters can threaten to overwhelm or outpace the policy itself.

Summary

Phase Zero combines all the activities of the US that engage and shape foreign environments with the intent of preventing conflict and advancing US interests. The lead art is

¹³⁴JP 3-05, I-3.

¹³⁵Sandra I. Erwin, “Special Operations Command Seeks a Bigger Role in Conflict Prevention,” *National Defense Magazine*, (29 November 2012), <http://nationaldefensemagazine.org/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=983>> (accessed 17 December 2012).

diplomacy. Phase Zero approaches are typically non-lethal with the military focusing on threat and friendly assessments, train-and-equip programs, capacity buildings, and military-to-military contacts.

The last decade of engagement and GWOT principles forged a new notion of Phase Zero as an operation unto itself that requires detailed planning, programs, and execution to arrange US diplomatic, defense and development resources in a synchronized and effective manner. The art of Phase Zero is fusing disparate activities to accomplish the objectives of US diplomacy, defense, and development efforts. A key challenge lies in the details of execution: exactly how military engagement operations, actions and activities are blended with development and diplomacy to accomplish strategic objectives.

PHASE ZERO TENSIONS

Part three analyzes Phase Zero tensions. Within these tensions, special operations operational art constructs are examined. The tensions are first examined through the lens of organizational cultures. Next, analysis is conducted on the challenges of synchronizing the host nation, the US embassy, the combatant command (DoD writ large), and special operations (within DoD). This synchronization process is analyzed in three sections: policy, programs, and posture. The policy section, the focal point of part three, contains vignettes on special operations in Yemen, Indonesia, and Thailand. Part three concludes with synchronization observations and insights.

The Sources of Phase Zero Tensions

Phase Zero challenges all US diplomatic, development, and defense efforts to synchronize and achieve commonly understood and accepted goals. When harmonized, these US government efforts, coupled with commercial US economic, social, and informational influences,

offer compelling prospects for a host nation. In theory this is simple. In practice, it is complex, precarious, and rife with tensions.

The Marshall Plan in post-WWII Germany provides a supreme example of effective, harmonized US power. Initiated in April 1948, the Marshall Plan is credited with the rapid economic recovery of war-ravaged European states, the promotion of free and fair markets managed by democratic governments, and the integration of Europe as a single economic community. The Marshall Plan fostered prosperity and nurtured a system that federated European interests, a prescient hedge against future continental wars.¹³⁶ In a post-war reconstruction environment, the Marshall Plan effectively unified US diplomatic might, development assistance, and military power, binded together with a democratic ideology. Today's Phase Zero strategies aim for this exact effect. A critical difference is that modern-day Phase Zero is a more modest and decentralized proposition that occurs within sovereign countries often challenged by internal instability and "rhizomatic" threats.¹³⁷

The obstacle to harmony in Phase Zero is the tension between the perspectives, practices, and cultures of the US diplomatic, development, defense communities. Where SOF are present, special operations representatives add an additional element of friction. The special operations perspective is seldom captured by country team defense representatives such as defense attaches (intelligence-focused) or security assistance officers (program-focused). Thus, special operations perspectives often have patchy entry-points into the overall country team for on advancing US interests.

¹³⁶Robert Payne, *The Marshall Story: A Biography of General George C. Marshall* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1951), 303-321.

¹³⁷Max Manwaring, "Ambassador Stephen Krasner's Orienting Principle for Foreign Policy (and Military Management)--Responsible Sovereignty." In his writings on contemporary security threats, Manwaring discusses the rise of "rhizomatic" threats that have "an apparently hierarchical system above ground- visible in the operational and political arenas, and with another system centered in the roots underground," 29.

Phase Zero tensions arise when the actions of US agencies merge within the narrow confines of a host nation. In this environment, a logical and reasonable act conducted by one agency might be entirely counterproductive for another. For example, visible military actions (DoD) improve security but strain diplomacy (DoS).¹³⁸ US military humanitarian aid delivery can achieve clear objectives yet can undermine the perception of a host nation government's ability to support its population in a crisis. When this occurs, diplomatic relations become strained. Similarly, diplomatic decisions may increase strategic leverage but raise new security risks by narrowing tactical military options. The US military advisory effort in Mali was diplomatically restricted from accessing the dangerous northern Mali region.¹³⁹ While a diplomatically prudent measure, the US had poor intelligence and few options when Al Qaeda in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) occupied northern Mali (Gao, Timbuktu) in 2012.¹⁴⁰ Development projects, despite efforts to be non-political, also contribute to tensions. Development projects, however altruistic, are partisan acts with social consequences that, if not implemented properly, may resonate in unknown and often harmful ways well after project completion.¹⁴¹ Each discipline (defense, diplomacy, development), no matter how expertly executed, is bound to have a splinter effect. These US interagency tensions magnify when interacting with a host nation that has its own competing agendas and aspirations on how to benefit from US largesse.

¹³⁸The US raid on May 2, 2011 in Abbottabad, Pakistan to capture or kill Osama Bin Laden is an example of the tension between security actions and the diplomatic aftermath. Whether the raid was successful or not, diplomatic relations with Pakistan were clear to be damaged.

¹³⁹A07 and A21 with Special Operations Forces officers directly involved in SOF engagement in Mali, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 8 September 2012. Interviews conducted under a non-attribution agreement use the author's numbering method.

¹⁴⁰Ibid. Craig Whitlock, "U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Africa defined by a decade of missteps," *Washington Post*, 4 February 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/craig-whitlock/2011/02/28/AB5dpFP_page.html (accessed 9 February 2013).

¹⁴¹USAID representative Dale Skoric, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 13 August 2012.

The diverging perspectives of diplomacy, development, and defense officials can be better understood by examining organizational norms and cultures. Official representatives can be expected to interact with agency-centric viewpoints and unique proclivities.¹⁴² These seemingly superficial differences often furnish the tensions that arise. At the risk of oversimplification, the perspectives of each are juxtaposed below.

Diplomacy places great emphasis on continual relations and negotiations akin to astute business practices.¹⁴³ Diplomatic protocols are paramount, interpersonal skills are valued, and erudition and strong field credentials are markers of respect. Respect and honor quotients within host nations are critical for effective diplomatic relations and establishing important trust relationships. The State Department values precision in writing and speaking over planning and briefing.¹⁴⁴

Development cultures are a mix of altruistic energy and programmatic realities.¹⁴⁵ USAID, as the principal agent of foreign non-military assistance, conducts nearly all development projects through contractors, adding another layer of uncertainty in the potentially profitable realm of development work. Development officials are also cautious of association with military actions. For sound reasons, development work too closely associated with military action can

¹⁴²Anthony H. Cordesman, “Department of Defense, State Department, USAID and NSC Reporting on the Afghan War,” 19 May 2010, Center for Strategic Studies and International Studies (CSIS), <http://csis.org/publication/department-defense-state-department-usaid-and-nsc-reporting-afghan-war> (accessed 14 January 2013).

¹⁴³Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2012), 171-189. The phrase “observe-and-report” is taken from Chandrasekaran’s description and narrative about US civilian agencies in Afghanistan (and Iraq).

¹⁴⁴US Department of State, official website, “13 Dimensions of a Foreign Service Officer,” <http://careers.state.gov/resources/downloads/downloads/13-dimensions>, (accessed 15 January 2013). The comment that writing and speaking is valued over planning and briefing is not the official position of the US State Department. This is the observation of the author in working with both military and State Department personnel.

¹⁴⁵Tiaji Salaam-Blyther, *USAID Global Health Programs FY2001-FY2012 Request* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 30 June 2011), 10-11.

invite unwanted risks. They may portray development actions in a martial light or confuse host nation populations who may associate uniformed personnel with humanitarian aid and not long-term development. Development teams value budgets, monitoring, and evaluation of impacts.¹⁴⁶

Military cultures view the world through the lens of security threats and vulnerabilities. Military personnel are action-oriented with infectious, if overbearing, can-do attitudes. With huge capacity and a myriad of programs across all armed services, military actions can be overwhelming, military officials can be myopic, and the totality of military programs in a country often lacks a single synchronizing official. Armed services do bring assertive leadership, collaborative skills, broad professional competencies and credible capacity to accomplish difficult goals in challenging environments. Military-to-military relationships are also easily established with long-term relationship and capability benefits for all sides. Military cultures value planning.¹⁴⁷

Special operations representatives, a subculture in the defense community, bring a dual-natured perspective. The indirect perspective favors the delivery of low footprint, highly skilled assistance to host nation security forces. More direct SOF approaches specialize in delivering precision, lethal effects against human and network targets through unilateral or partnered methods. SOF are relationship-centric. Unlike services that employ large platforms (ships, planes), special operations are heavily human oriented. SOF bring regional expertise through basic language proficiency and modest cultural exposure. While cultural acumen helps breed trust, SOF are also associated with clandestine methods and human targeting programs, a

¹⁴⁶Dale Skoric, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 13 August 2012.

¹⁴⁷Andrea Barbara Baumann, "Clash of Organizational Cultures? The Challenge of Integrating Civil and Military Efforts in Stabilisation Operations," *RUSI Journal* 153, no. 6 (December 2008): 70-73, <http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/Baumann.pdf> (accessed 14 January 2013). Baumann focuses on the deeper philosophical disagreements between the military and civilians conducting stabilization operations. The cultural descriptions of each agency are the author's and not Baumann's.

potential antibody to developing trust. SOF are typically older with an expectation of great autonomy.¹⁴⁸

The cultural and organization tensions inherent in these agencies are certainly reconcilable. Relationships of trust built on credibility, communication, and professional competency will not erase these tensions, but can nullify their corrosive effects. Bridging these cultural divides requires sophistication, patience and a reasonable willingness to identify and mitigate these tensions. It also requires detailed frameworks and explicit methods that connect the policy logic to the commitment of US resources.

Synchronization Frameworks

Effective action in Phase Zero involves synchronizing host nation equities, US policy, US-sponsored programs, US military posture and the people and processes that create unity of effort (Figure 5).

¹⁴⁸ Various USSOF briefings cite that the average age of a special operator is 29; the average age for an officer is 34.

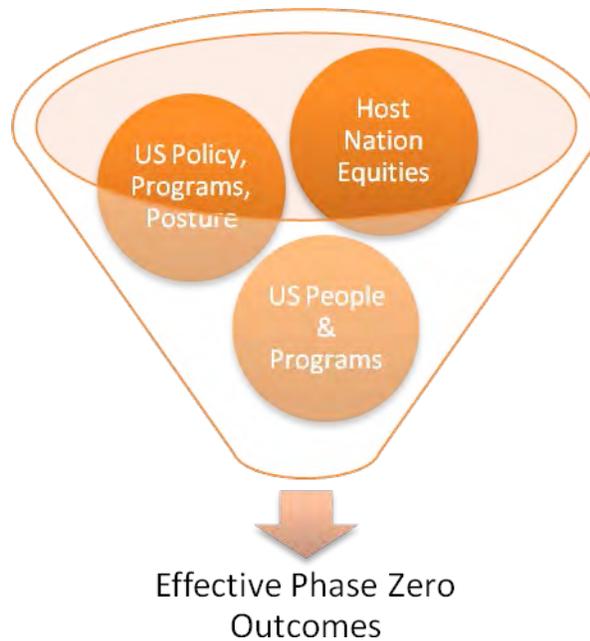


Figure 4. Effective Phase Zero Outcomes

Source: Created by author

The US views host nation interests through the lens of the host nation’s Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) strategy. IDAD is “the full range of measures taken by a nation to promote its growth and to protect itself from subversion, insurgency, lawlessness, terrorism, and other threats to security.”¹⁴⁹ In Phase Zero, US policy contributes to and shapes a host nation’s IDAD strategy. Most host nations where the US contributes Phase Zero assistance are contending with some form of instability, civil strife, governing weaknesses, or external threats. An IDAD strategy can be clear and codified (Plan Colombia) or entirely lacking in coherency (Somalia). The aim of the US is to support, but not supplant, a host nation’s internal plan. Overwhelming US assistance can be counterproductive if the host nation is viewed as a mere

¹⁴⁹JP 1-02, 55. IDAD is a US term, not a host nation term.

recipient of US assistance on terms dictated by the US. To properly support a host nation strategy, US diplomacy, development and defense agencies conduct strategies guided by their staffed and approved execution plans. Each is discussed below.

The US Embassy country team, led by DoS, is guided by their Country Campaign Plan (CCP) and Integrated Country Strategy (ICS).¹⁵⁰ The ICS is “country-level strategy, budget allocation and request, and performance assessment document.”¹⁵¹ The country-specific plans are informed and guided by the Department of State Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) that outlines the most significant regional foreign policy goals and resource requirements.¹⁵²

Since 2004, the Department of State and USAID have issued a joint strategic plan. From these strategic priorities, USAID develops a Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).¹⁵³ At the lower, execution level, USAID uses an Operational Plan (OP) that allocates resources and directs the means of implementation. To look regionally, USAID assembles (or joins) joint planning cells comprised of Department of State, US Department of Agriculture

¹⁵⁰The Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) replaced the Mission Strategic Resource Plan (MSRP) in 2012.

¹⁵¹3D Planning Guide, 5.

¹⁵²The US Department of State divides the world into six regional bureaus under the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. The six bureaus are African Affairs (AF), East Asia and Pacific Affairs (EAP), Europe and Eurasia Affairs (EUR), Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) and Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). The officer of the Undersecretary for Political Affairs is the “day-to-day manager of the overall regional and bilateral policy issues.” US Department of State website, 2012 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/436.htm> (accessed 18 December 2012). The Joint Regional Strategy replaced the Bureau Region Strategic Plan (BSRP) in 2012.

¹⁵³Civil-Military Operations Guide, draft version 2.3, February 2012. This guide, still in development, was developed by USAID’s Office of Civil-Military Cooperation. The draft guide is referenced here because it contains the latest and most accurate descriptions of “3D” documents, processes and organizations.

(USDA) and others including the US military. When employed, these joint planning cells are powerful mechanisms for synchronization.¹⁵⁴

The US military takes Phase Zero theater-strategic guidance from the combatant commander issued through the Theater Campaign Plan (TCP) and Global Campaign Plans (GCP). Though not standardized, the US military generally devises a Country Action Plan (CAP) that logically connects the combatant command efforts with the country team Integrated Country Strategy. The CAP serves as a concise (5-7 pages) road map of how, where, and why US military capacity is applied within a country.

CAPs use “lines of effort,” a joint doctrinal term that describes the purpose of an activity (non-geographic) as a categorical descriptor of related military intentions and programs.¹⁵⁵ Example CAP lines of effort include build host nation military capacity, develop host nation institutional capability, improve information sharing, and improve port maritime control. CAPs aim to reflect, on a very broad level, the totality of US military efforts within each country. Capturing the sum total of all military efforts can be a challenge, particularly when all five armed services are applying significant, persistent engagement underpinned by major sales or procurement programs.

Special operations Phase Zero contributions fall into four categories, none of which are neatly defined by a single codified document. The categories are: situational awareness/understanding; craft and expand access venues; develop and nurture human and

¹⁵⁴A06 with USAID representative, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 13 August 2012.

¹⁵⁵JP 1-02. Line of Effort (LOE): “In the context of joint operation planning, using the purpose (cause and effect) to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions by linking multiple tasks and missions,” 185.

physical networks, and provide capability and capacity building to host nation security forces.¹⁵⁶ The majority of special operations efforts are typically reflected in the CAPs. In certain cases, CAPs are written by special operations representatives, particularly when USSOF is the lead or majority military engagement effort in the country.¹⁵⁷

These framework strategies and documents provide the cognitive direction and programmatic orientation of each US agency and the host nation. While not hierarchical in nature, the country team is the *ipso facto* synchronization lead. The US Ambassador, by extension and by the authority of a presidential appointment, exercises command-like authority within a country for all US government sponsored actions. With few exceptions and within legal parameters, if the US Ambassador directs a start, change, or stop to an operation, action or activity, then it is his or her prerogative to do so. A SOF officer explains his experience in cultivating this relationship:

It is not quite accurate for DoD to complain that we have the authorities to do anything but the approvals to do nothing ... SOF can be very powerful agents of good interagency cooperation and expertise but only once you've built trust and relationships with members of the team, you are interacting socially, you are demonstrating competence, doing the small things well ... this is not cloak and dagger stuff or derring-do, this is the Ambassador saying 'when I talk to this officer, he's knowledgeable, he doesn't try to speak outside of his lane, he doesn't fake any expertise and he understands my vision for the country and where I'm comfortable and potentially uncomfortable with DoD.'¹⁵⁸

Even with a clear understanding of the Ambassador's role and coherent organizational strategies, the implementing details of engagements prove difficult to arrange in time, space, and purpose. The outcomes of these strategies are policy interpretation, program implementation, and

¹⁵⁶ A08 with Special Forces officer, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 6 August 2012.

¹⁵⁷ At the inception of the Trans-Sahel Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) in European Command (2005-2007 period), Country Action Plan development was led by Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) in conjunction with COCOM guidance. Similarly, Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) took the lead in the mid-2000s in developing similar products for countries with growing SOF engagements.

¹⁵⁸ US Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel Josh Walker, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 6 August 2012.

armed forces posture. These efforts are thoroughly human endeavors and not a mechanistic process. That is what makes them so difficult. Policy, programs, and posture are analyzed below to illustrate the complexity of frictions in Phase Zero.

Synchronization Challenge One: Policy

The implementing activities in Phase Zero are an attempt to “translate the strategic and policy guidance to actions that get the job done on the ground.”¹⁵⁹ Deconflicting and synchronizing the myriad of activities aiming to achieve policy goals is one challenge of implementing policy. A second and more difficult challenge is the widely interpreted and even disputed actions that should be applied against and within a policy. This second policy conundrum is often a concern with special operations that are conducted within and across the borders of a sovereign host nation.

To illustrate policy challenges germane to special operations in Phase Zero, three Phase Zero policy vignettes are examined: an *incremental* example of counterterrorism campaigning in Yemen; a *legislative* example of the 1997 Leahy Amendment requiring human rights vetting prior to US military assistance; and a *political* example of sustained US engagement in Thailand despite a historical propensity for non-democratic regime change (coup d’etats).

Incremental Policy Vignette: Yemen

In September 2011, then-CIA Director David Petraeus proclaimed the Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) “the most dangerous regional node in the global

¹⁵⁹COL (Ret.) David Maxwell, Associate Director, Center for Security Studies and Security Studies Program, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 30 July 2012.

jihad.”¹⁶⁰ Based on foiled plots to attack the US in 2009 (US bound airliner on Christmas day) and 2010 (parcel shipments), AQAP asserted itself as a regional jihad group with the intent and capability to attack the US homeland. On 4 October 2012, the US State Department declared the Yemen-based Ansar al-Sharia (an AQ affiliate) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).¹⁶¹

To combat AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia in their Yemeni safe havens, the US increased its aid to Yemen from \$61.9 million in 2006 to \$316.4 million in 2012.¹⁶² In early 2010 the US authorized \$155.3 million in security assistance to Yemen with \$34.5 million appropriated for Yemeni special operations forces counterterrorism operations.¹⁶³

Providing assistance to Yemen remains complicated by five factors: a Yemeni civil war; the pervasive influence of Yemeni security forces by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh; a controversial legal footing for US-sponsored targeting operations; a Yemeni population sensitive to US influence;¹⁶⁴ and the involvement of US citizens (Anwar al-Awlaki, killed September 30, 2011 by a drone strike) in Yemeni-based AQAP organizations.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰Reuters, “CIA Chief: Yemen Qaeda most dangerous,” *Reuters online news service*, 13 September 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/13/us-usa-security-qaeda-idUSTRE78C3G720110913> (accessed 15 January 2013).

¹⁶¹Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and US Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 12 November 2012), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34170.pdf> (accessed 15 December 2012).

¹⁶²CRS report, 20.

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴*2011 Yemen Stability Survey*, March 2011, Glevum Associates, LLC. In a survey of 1005 Yemeni adults, only 4 percent surveyed “somewhat or strongly approve” of Yemeni government cooperation with the US.

¹⁶⁵CRS report, 19-21.



Figure 5. Map of Yemen¹⁶⁶

Source: CRS, *Yemen*, July 2012

Given this context and the sensitivities involved, US policy and in-country actions in Yemen are built and applied incrementally. According to a Congressional Services Report:

U.S. aid to Yemen in any given fiscal year can come from as many as 17 different aid programs managed by multiple agencies, including the Department of State, USAID, and the Department of Defense. Annual appropriations legislation specifically requires the executive branch to notify the Appropriations Committees prior to the obligation of funds for programs in Yemen.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ CRS report, *Yemen*, July 2012, 2.

¹⁶⁷ CRS report, *Yemen*, July 2012, 14.

The operational art challenge is the management of seventeen programs--each with its own programmatic timelines--to achieve a synchronized effort. These often-cumbersome programs are designed around bureaucratic orderliness rather than military precision. The result is incremental delivery and application. Even cohesive packages become large administrative matters foisted on small, forward-based military teams. In the National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1207), authorized on June 7, 2012, DoD and DoS jointly certified \$75 million in aid to Yemen's Minister of the Interior Counterterror Forces.¹⁶⁸

Assistance may include the provision of equipment, supplies, and training, as well as assistance for minor military construction, for the following purpose: "To enhance the ability of the Yemen Ministry of Interior Counter Terrorism Forces to conduct counter-terrorism operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its affiliates"...The GSCF FY2012 aid includes, among other things, funds for night vision goggles, armored wheeled vehicles, and operational training.¹⁶⁹

This package provides a substantial military aid package that requires a thoughtful and deliberate training and assistance campaign. Beyond the mere programmatics of these programs, an operational art is required to connect the largesse of military aid with the US and Yemeni campaign objectives. The US government assistance to Yemen, both development and military aid, is further complicated with a publically debated question: Is the US at war in Yemen? Or is Yemen what steady-state Phase Zero operations look like in today's threat environment?

Yemen provides a vexing policy case of joint US-Yemeni actions against AQAP networks in conjunction within a troubled Yemeni political arena. The September 20, 2011 drone strike on US citizen and Ansar al-Sharia member Anwar al-Awlaki raised the public profile of US actions in Yemen. To increase the transparency of US actions in Yemen, on June 15, 2012 US

¹⁶⁸CRS report, 15. "Section 1207 (n) (C) of the FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-81) established a new transitional authority that would permit the Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, to assist counterterrorism and peacekeeping efforts in Yemen during FY2012."

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 15.

President Barack Obama publically declared that the US is actively engaged in joint (US-Yemeni) hostile actions against AQAP in Yemen and Somalia.

The U.S. military has also been working closely with the Yemeni government to operationally dismantle and ultimately eliminate the terrorist threat posed by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the most active and dangerous affiliate of al-Qa'ida today. Our joint efforts have resulted in direct action against a limited number of AQAP operatives and senior leaders in that country who posed a terrorist threat to the United States and our interests.¹⁷⁰

The details of operations in Yemen are largely classified. However, the public articulation of US actions in Yemen is increasingly declarative. From the appropriations, programs of record, publically acknowledged operations, and declarations from The White House, there is clearly an interagency campaign-style approach in Yemen.¹⁷¹ Examining the relationship between intelligence, development, diplomacy, surgical strike, and special warfare is fundamental to assessing such a special operations (or interagency) operational art. Such an examination in Yemen is beyond the classification of this study.

The incremental nature of US policy in Yemen demonstrates a cautious and responsible escalation of support to Yemen with the full visibility and concurrence of the executive and the legislative branches. It also represents how incremental policies and programs, bound together by small but capable US special operations forces and interagency partners, can expand the Phase Zero paradigm into a potential construct for creative and effective operational art. This operational art must weave together a campaign from existing authorities; establish discreet but

¹⁷⁰President Barak Obama, "Presidential Letter--2012 War Powers Resolution 6-month Report" (Washington, DC: The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 15 June 2012), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/presidential-letter-2012-war-powers-resolution-6-month-report> (accessed 18 December 2012). Until this letter, US actions in Yemen were characterized as unofficially acknowledged by the press and by extension, the US government.

¹⁷¹JP 5-0, GL-6. A campaign is defined as "A series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space."

capable command and logistics nodes; and integrate partner-building, development assistance, and targeting strikes within *a politically sensitive environment*.

In this charged political environment, the open declaration of a US military campaign, SOF-led or otherwise, would invite great risk with near-certain counterproductive outcomes. An alternative is a nascent campaign, woven from patchwork programs, postures, and agreements. An embryonic campaign—one executed without an official moniker such as Operation Enduring Freedom—can be more judiciously calibrated to pursue tactical, operational, and strategic objectives. Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula typify the sensitive environments where these campaigns are desirable. Whether publically declared a campaign or not, this special operations application fits the campaign definition of “a series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space.”¹⁷² Publically acknowledged but discreet actions in locales like Yemen increasingly have the logic, synchronization, and characteristics of an interagency campaign. In order to achieve results at the tactical, strategic, and diplomatic levels, these campaigns require skilled operational and diplomatic art, applied with great finesse and insight by a synchronized interagency team.

The Yemen case hints at the art of the possible on crafting a distinctive, other than major military intervention type of Phase Zero campaign. The potential for a special operations-focused Phase Zero operational art has been made possible by incremental changes in US security cooperation programs. “The broad definition of security cooperation to include all DoD international programs and those seven FAA/AECA authorized programs administered by DSCA has significantly increased the playing field for DoD.”¹⁷³ US actions in Yemen seek to balance

¹⁷²JP 1-02, 37.

¹⁷³Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM), *The Management of Security Cooperation (Greenbook)*, February 2012, 31st edition, <http://www.disam.dscamilitary.com/pages/pubs/greenbook.aspx> (accessed 18 December 2012)

the requirements of operational secrecy, public transparency, executive writ, and legislative oversight while coping with the regional sensitivities of intrusive US actions in the Arabian Peninsula.

A larger legal, political and moral debate, beyond the scope of this vignette, is at the heart of US operations in Yemen. Importantly, the Yemen case illustrates how US policy, adjusted on the margins and incrementally applied, is sufficient to enable a discreet, scalable, joint SOF campaign approach that is “left of the Joint Task Force (JTF) threshold.”¹⁷⁴ The campaign requirements in locales such as Yemen align well with USSOF attributes and core competencies. The operational design that concocts the organizing logic of such a campaign must blend the primacy of policy with a vast mix of programs implemented, in part, by small USSOF teams.

Legislative Policy Vignette: 1997 Leahy Amendment

The “Leahy Amendment” or “Leahy Act” is shorthand for a 1997 amendment to the 2001 Foreign Assistance Act. Named after Vermont Senator Patrick J. Leahy, the “spirit and intent of the act is to force foreign governments to take responsibility for, investigate, and prosecute cases of human rights abuses. Leahy is really not about individuals or units; it is about pressuring the governments.”¹⁷⁵ The amendment stipulates:

No assistance (includes both articles and training) authorized by the FAA [Foreign Assistance Act] or the AECA [Arms Export Control Act] will be made available to any unit of the security forces of a country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Funding may be provided once the secretary determines and reports to Congress that the affected country is taking effective measures to bring the responsible members of the security forces unit to justice [section 620M, FAA] ... Proposed students and/or units are to be

¹⁷⁴United States Special Operations Command (USASOC), unclassified command brief, September 2011 (Headquarters USASOC, Fort Bragg, NC).

¹⁷⁵Charles “Ken” Comer, “Leahy in Indonesia: Damned if you do (and even if you don’t),” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 37: 53-70, 2010, Francis & Taylor Group, LLC, 66.

vetted using all available USG [United States Government] resources prior to any training or combined exercises.¹⁷⁶

Since its passage, the Leahy act has blocked military assistance (weapons funding and training) to countries such as Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Pakistan.¹⁷⁷ In the case of US relations with Indonesia, the amendment represents a policy dilemma.

The Southeast Asian country of Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation (238 million) with a predominately Muslim population. Indonesia is strategically located north of major US-ally, Australia, and south of the Philippines and Malaysia (Figure 8). It lies astride the Malacca Straits, the world's fourth largest shipping lane. US strategic interests include economic and commercial trade, security (counterterror), and competition for influence in Southeast Asia.



Figure 6. Map of Indonesia¹⁷⁸

Source: CRS, 31 January 2011

¹⁷⁶DISAM Greenbook, 2-10.

¹⁷⁷June S. Beittel, "Colombia: Background, US Relations, and Congressional Interest," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 28 November 2012), 1-26.

¹⁷⁸ Bruce Vaughn, *Indonesia: Domestic Politics, Strategic Dynamics, and US Interests* Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 31 January 2011, 37.

The decade of the 2000s witnessed two significant trends in US-Indonesian relations. First, Indonesia showed progress in areas of concern for the US, principally in representative government and security sector reform, including human rights. Second, the US GWOT strategy sought improved visibility and access to Southeast Asia terror threats. The threat that most concerned the US was the presence of Al Qaeda affiliates in the Celebes Sea bordering nations of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.¹⁷⁹ As the US and Indonesia attempted to move closer in relations, two obstacles prevented closer collaboration. The first was the enforcement of the Leahy Act, which prohibited the growth of US bilateral military engagement with Indonesian Army (TNI) units.¹⁸⁰ The second obstacle was the negative effects of the US GWOT in Indonesia, plummeting the perceptions of the US and, subsequently, reducing US “soft power” influence and access.¹⁸¹

This diplomatic impasse was interrupted by the catastrophic December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. From this sudden, massive humanitarian crisis and its attendant global attention, the US and Indonesia rapidly expanded collaboration in the realm of humanitarian assistance. The Indonesian government immediately began accepting US humanitarian assistance provided from US Pacific Command, principally in the northwest Sumatra region centered on Banda Aceh. This humanitarian crisis collaboration thawed US-Indonesia relations and opened up the possibility of improved state relations. Toward this end, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice “exercised a

¹⁷⁹Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

¹⁸⁰TNI stands for Tentara Nasional Indonesia, translated as Indonesia National Armed Forces.

¹⁸¹Nye Jr., *The Future of Power*, 22, 55. In explaining soft power, Nye describes how Indonesian positive perceptions of the US drastically fell following the initiation of the 2001 GWOT. Similarly, positive perceptions rose following the US’ 2005 humanitarian assistance to victims of the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami near Aceh.

national waiver provision provided to the FY2005 FOAA [Foreign Operations Appropriations Act] to remove congressional restrictions on foreign military financing and lethal defense articles on November 22, 2005 and represented a reestablishment of normalized military relations.”¹⁸² This waiver triggered an executive and legislative branch thrust-and-parry over US assistance to Indonesia, centered on the Leahy provisions. While the spigot of US assistance was eventually opened wider, US Pacific Command (PACOM) and its sub-unified command, Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC), were stifled in reopening engagement with units with spotty human right records, most notably the Indonesia Special Forces Command, KOPASUS.¹⁸³

With military engagement to KOPASUS potentially feasible, the US and allied nations aimed to increase collaboration with Indonesia on identifying and defeating radical Islamic terror threats. As part of a larger approach to the whole of Southeast Asia, the US Departments of State and Defense jointly sought increased engagement with Indonesian counterterrorism police and military units. US law enforcement agencies, in conjunction with Australian Federal Police (AFP), built strong relations with “Detachment 88,” Indonesia’s police counterterror unit. Many cite the police actions of Detachment 88 against Indonesia-based terror networks as the model of skilled, discreet counterterrorism.¹⁸⁴

Within the special operations realm, engagement with the counterterrorism units in KOPASUS were stifled. Strategically, US counterterrorism efforts in support of Malaysia and the Philippines were already challenged by the vast, unchecked transit region that included the Indonesian archipelago (Figure 9).

¹⁸²Comer, 60.

¹⁸³KOPASUS is an acronym for Komando Pasukan Khusus, or “Special Forces Command.”

¹⁸⁴CRS, *Indonesia*, 31 January 2011, 36.



Figure 7. Map of Celebes Sea Region

Source: USGS, 2011

The main safe havens for Southeast Asia terrorist threats included the sea and island border region between east Malaysia, the southern Philippines and northern Indonesia.¹⁸⁵ Further complicating this challenge was the inability to grow military relationships, interoperability, and capacity with KOPASUS. A Pacific-based special forces officer stated, “Indonesia was a constant point of frustration. The vetting requirements shut down all engagement, despite clear openings as early as 2006. SOF engagement is about trust models, developing and expanding relationships... it takes years to develop trust models with true leverage points. We just couldn’t get started.”¹⁸⁶

The policy dilemma of the KOPASUS case required measuring the risks and rewards of enforcing principled US legislative actions that prohibits engaging foreign security units deemed important to long-term national interests. The wide interpretations and uneven enforcement of the

¹⁸⁵ Abuza, 121-178.

¹⁸⁶ US Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel Adrian Donahoe, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 20 August 2012.

Leahy Act color this debate. Critics of the act cite waivers gained for engagements in Colombia¹⁸⁷ and Pakistan but stringent enforcement in Indonesia despite clear improvements in human rights actions.¹⁸⁸

It is doubtful that the Leahy standards applied to Indonesia are applied anywhere else in the world, with the notable exceptions of Colombia and Sri Lanka, and they place Indonesia into a category normally reserved for Iraq or Afghanistan. No other nation in the Pacific Rim (except Sri Lanka) must face such scrutiny. Moreover, these types of HRV [Human Rights Vetting] standards are not applied to the two nations that consume roughly 70 percent of all US security assistance granted worldwide--Israel and Egypt.¹⁸⁹

The KOPASUS vignette demonstrates the tense intersection of policy realities and a putative operational art. PACOM and SOCPAC aspirations to shrink the maneuver and transit space between Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia involved linking the tactics and programs of three countries into a loosely organized regional strategy. This strategy was conceptualized as an iterative approach.¹⁹⁰ US bilateral relations connecting and merging with the formal and informal cooperative venues already established between Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Even without restrictions, the tenuous relations of these countries, vast ocean spaces, and interoperability challenges made this difficult to plan, implement, and synchronize. The inability of SOCPAC to engage a critical partner in this campaign-like approach further inhibited the establishment of a comprehensive regional approach. The combination of these factors stymied the formation of a regional operational art.

To be fair, lamenting over policy restrictions that stifle operational art risks elevating military efficacy over policy primacy. The Leahy Act, despite its controversies and uneven

¹⁸⁷President William J. Clinton signed a waiver on 22 August 2000 to expand military assistance to Colombia, principally to support counter-drug operations.

¹⁸⁸Comer, 62.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰Author experience at the Special Operations Command – Pacific, June 2006 to June 2008.

enforcement, is a policy with clear and broad aims regarding US assistance to potential partners. US military engagement is a tool to support these policy aims. The decade-long postponement of US SOF engagement with KOPASUS did generate pressure on the Indonesian government to institute reforms. Thus, the SOF operational art implementation suffered but for the larger and more comprehensive US aspiration of human rights reforms and improved civil-military relations. This vignette illustrates the clear conflict and resulting tensions when policy prohibitions prevent the execution of well-conceived military campaign constructs.

Political Policy Vignette: Special Operations Engagement in Thailand

In the past 70 years, the US and the Kingdom of Thailand have sustained consistently productive and friendly relations with mutual benefits in economic, commercial, military, and tourism interests. This consistency is remarkable given the staggering history of non-democratic regime change and political upheaval in Thailand. Since 1932, Thailand has experienced 18 coup d'etats.¹⁹¹ Underlying this statistic is an implicit truth about foreign relations: friends matter and strategic friends matter more. Thailand, a major non-NATO ally and historically reliable partner vis-a-vis US foreign policy objectives, is a strategic anchor point for the US in Asia.¹⁹² Beyond its influence in Southeast Asia, Thailand has tremendous geo-strategic access to the whole of the Asia-Pacific basin.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹Nicholas Farrelly, "Counting Thailand's Coups," *New Mandala*, (8 March 2011) <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2011/03/08/counting-thailands-coups/> (accessed 21 December 2012). There is some debate as to what qualifies as a coup d'etat or an attempted coup d'etat. The number is generally between 17 and 18. Wikipedia cites that since 1932, Thailand has had "17 constitutions and charters." Accessed on 12 December 2012 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand>.

¹⁹²Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ben Dolven, *Thailand: Background and US Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 5 June 2012).

¹⁹³The Kingdom of Thailand provided support for the US during the Vietnam war and more recently, supported the 2003 US invasion of Iraq with political backing and military force

What then classifies US-Thai engagement as a *political* policy vignette? Amidst the cyclical upheavals in Thai governments, US-Thailand military-to-military relationships have buttressed and steadied US-Thai relations. The historically productive and consistent US military engagement with Thailand is a key facet of maintaining US relations and interests in Southeast Asia.

Thailand periodically teeters below US stated ideals for democratic governance, media repression and other human rights issues.¹⁹⁴ In 2006, the Royal Thai Army (RTA) staged a coup d'etat that deposed the caretaker government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Despite this non-democratic action, US diplomatic language was relatively muted. Military-to-military relations and programs experienced short disruptions but were maintained.¹⁹⁵ The US response can be interpreted in two ways. The US can be viewed as showing prescient diplomatic patience while allowing Thai politics the time to work through upheaval. A second interpretation might question stalwart US support when Thai political actions undermine the clear US position against coup d'etats. Both interpretations have elements of truth. In 2007, Thailand conducted elections and returned to civilian-control, with few disruptions to US programs, operations, and activities.¹⁹⁶

contributions. Geo-strategically, Thailand sits at the crossroads of Asia with close proximity to South Asia, Northeast Asia, and Southeast Asia.

¹⁹⁴Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2011: Thailand," <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/thailand> (accessed on 21 December 2012). US Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: Thailand," Report, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eap/154403.htm> (accessed on 21 December 2012).

¹⁹⁵The Nation, "US cuts off millions in military aid to Thailand," 29 September 2006, http://nationmultimedia.com/2006/09/29/headlines/headlines_30014950.php (accessed 21 December 2012).

¹⁹⁶Chanlett-Avery and Dolven, CRS report, 12.

Underpinning US-Thai military-to-military relations is a fifty-year history of bilateral engagements between US and Thai special operations forces.¹⁹⁷ In 2011 alone, USSOF conducted over seventeen engagement events in a near-persistent pattern of US-Thai SOF exchanges, training, and exercises.¹⁹⁸ With this persistency in engagement, US-Thai SOF relations are conducted with the depth and trust gained from consistent operational and institutional collaboration.¹⁹⁹

The focal point for USSOF engagement with Thailand is the Royal Thai Army Special Warfare Command (RTA SWCOM). This command is roughly the Thai equivalent of the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC).²⁰⁰ With RTA as a main Thai SOF synchronizing headquarters, USSOF engagement has increasingly taken on more predictability and increased scope across the various SOF disciplines (counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, military information support operations).

US military engagement in Thailand is coordinated and synchronized by the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAGTHAI). JUSMAGTHAI is both a security assistance organization and the officer of primary responsibility for all US military bilateral engagement with Thailand.²⁰¹ Within JUSMAGTHAI, USSOF officers and noncommissioned officers craft USSOF engagement venues within the overall US engagement strategy. Within the

¹⁹⁷J. “Lumpy” Lumbaca, “The US-Thailand ARSOF Relationship,” *Special Warfare*, vol. 25, iss. 1 (January-March 2012), 52.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 52. Numerically counting engagements (exercises, training, exchanges) can be a misleading method to characterize engagement without the context of each event. For example, a six week Joint Combined Exchange for Training (JCET) is considered one event as well as a two-person, two-day exchange at a conference. In general, major events are counted as singular engagements with another layer of steady-state engagements (pre-deployment site surveys, informal exchanges, etc) occurring regularly.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 52.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*

²⁰¹Website of the Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand, www.jusmagthai.com. (accessed 4 January 2013).

JUSMAGTHAI model, strong USSOF-Thai relations create venues to grow broader US-Thai relations in the areas of International Military Exchange Training (IMET), the Combatting Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP), and multiple US-based education courses.²⁰² Strategically, US-Thai special operations engagements contribute to SOF interoperability, shared understanding, and regional partnership with deep trust models that survive political upheavals. USSOF engagement in Thailand also strengthens the broader military-to-military relationships that bolster the diplomatic connectivity between the nations.

Is there an operational art to USSOF engagement in Thailand? Yes, of sorts. This type of operational art is not campaigning in the combined arms sense of joint actions taken against a foe. USSOF engagement in Thailand seeks to create a persistent arc of engagement that is progressive, iterative, and builds on past training and education venues. When sustained engagements result in institutions like RTA SWCOM, then future engagements move beyond tactical exchanges into more sophisticated arenas. Such areas include military education, security philosophies, specialized training, regional threat assessment, and tailored operational approaches for both internal and external security threats.²⁰³ The RTA SWCOM example illustrates how sustained tactical and relational trust can grow vague cooperation notions into more lasting strategic institutions and actions.²⁰⁴

The USSOF engagement model aims to strike a balance between US national security interests and Thai aspirations for improved SOF capability. In countries where coup d'états are frequent, host nation SOF capacity can be highly political. Cognizant of this dynamic, USSOF in Thailand persistently pursue US objectives in Southeast Asia in conjunction with partnered Thai

²⁰²Lumbaca, 53.

²⁰³Author experience at Special Operations Command Pacific, 2006-2008.

²⁰⁴The development of the NATO Special Operations Headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany (now in Mons, Belgium) is a parallel case of developing tactical relationships into standing institutions.

SOF units. USSOF engagement, while near persistent, is not viewed as overbearing, intrusive or suspect. Based on long-term collaboration and quality trust models, USSOF engagement hovers at the correct “saturation” level for US resource allocation, Thai political sensitivities, and continuity of programs. This requires a creative application of art and science to build forward progress by weaving together episodic events, programs, and activities.²⁰⁵ This model is bolstered by carefully emplaced regionally aligned, culturally educated, and Thai-language trained USSOF representatives. These specialists synchronize the tactical engagements and Thai institutional building projects in conjunction with the JUSMAGTHAI offices.²⁰⁶ The placement of such SOF representatives in Thailand also has a strategic dividend of providing US insight on Thai perspectives on security. In-country SOF teams help assess how US actions resonate within Thai governmental and population spheres. Additionally, such representatives articulate USSOF programs in order to decrease the frictions within intersecting US programs. A SOF embassy representative explains this role:

[SOF in-country] representatives act as an interpreter for SOF actions and almost as a lubricant when SOF are on the seam of intelligence and operations. They are well-informed on political sensitivities and can spell out the purpose of SOF actions which can get lost over time. The minimum requirement is deconfliction. The bigger goal is synchronization.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Author experience at Special Operations Command Pacific, 2006-2008, and 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne), 2008-2010.

²⁰⁶ US Army Special Forces Colonel Paul Ott, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 5 September 2012. Colonel Ott commands the Special Warfare Education Group (SWEG) at the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) at Fort Bragg, NC. Historically, the SWEG language school graduates between 25 to 35 Thai language educated ARSOF officers per year.

²⁰⁷ A26 with US Army Special Forces officer, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 6 September 2012. This SOF officer explained the role of a SOF in-country representative writ large, not specific to Thailand.

USSOF engagement in Thailand employs campaign logic that respects the sovereignty and sensitivities of the Thai government. This manner of operational art has to skillfully apply US power to expect US influence in return.²⁰⁸

The Department of State has the task of safely steering vital US military engagement programs through periods of political upheaval. In the 2006 Thailand coup d'état example, emerging frictions were managed with few disruptions to US diplomatic relations or military programs. The sustained US-Thai SOF engagements exemplify the calibrated balance of assisting a regional partner while pursuing US interests. As the US rebalances its strategic focus on the Asia-Pacific region, the US engagement model in Thailand presents a compelling case study on quietly pursuing US interests and building alliances without initiating provocative maneuvers against potential competitors or threats.

Summary: Policy and Engagement

Operational art in a non-wartime environment aspires to translate policy into programs, actions, and engagements that achieve strategic objectives. The crafting of a Phase Zero operational art is conducted not *in spite of* policies, but in support of them. USSOF engagements or putative campaigns exist within imperfect, even byzantine, policy arenas. The vignettes of Yemen (*incremental* policy), the Leahy Act (*legislative* policy), and Thailand (*political* policy) present the different circumstances where SOF operational art aims for coherency. These vignettes illustrate the tensions of linking tactics to strategy without the liberties often inherent in a declared theater of war.

In Phase Zero, host nation sovereignty and US policy drive US in-country actions. Subsequently, operational art becomes a subordinate discipline. This limits military flexibility and restricts freedom of action. If sluggish bureaucratic procedures are also in play then the

²⁰⁸Nye Jr., "The Future of Power," 32-50, 225-231.

impediments to operational art become overwhelming. Overcoming these obstacles to preserve the coherency of USSOF engagements is the key challenge. The Yemen, Indonesia and Thailand vignettes show how such pressures impacted USSOF expressions of operational art. Former SAMS Director COL (Ret.) Kevin Benson summarizes the need to develop an operational art scheme in this type of Phase Zero environment.

The art of strategy is giving politically aware military advice to policy makers. Clausewitz cites that war and the use of force is an extension of policy – this is where the operational art comes in ... we need operational artists in Phase Zero who can rationalize and synchronize engagements to inform the current operations folks on what we are pursuing, what policy we are supporting, and why this is important strategically. No matter what we call it, this is about understanding and supporting strategic and policy objectives.²⁰⁹

Where military actions are restrained and potentially counterproductive, the contemplation and application of a creative, non-standard operational art construct takes on even greater importance. While this is simple in concept it is difficult in practice.²¹⁰ Extracting insights from the USSOF Thailand model is a sound start to reframing operational art constructs suited to these environments.

Synchronization Challenge Two: Programs

Whereas policy sets direction, guidance and parameters, US programs are the implementing mechanisms of policy. Programs refer to the US government funded international programs binned under the broad title of *Security Cooperation*.

²⁰⁹COL (Ret.) Kevin Benson, a former School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) Director, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 20 August 2012.

²¹⁰Christopher J. Lamb, “Statement of Christopher J. Lamb, Distinguished Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University on “The Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces,”” before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, 11 July 2012.

Security Cooperation combines “all DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific US security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.”²¹¹ It consists of seven program types with multiple sub-programs under each category. In all, US Security Cooperation consists of a staggering 97 programs or sub-programs of record (Figure 6).²¹² The seven main programs associated with the Department of Defense are security assistance, global train and equip, international armaments cooperation, humanitarian assistance, training and education, combined exercises, and military-to-military contacts.

These programs are the strategic *means* of delivering US security capacity to foreign partners. The construction of a country engagement plan interprets strategy goals, policy intent, and military objectives and conceptualizes an operational approach appropriate to accomplish these ends. Shifting from art to science, implementation requires aligning resources, authorizations, approvals, and programs to execute the operational approach.²¹³

²¹¹ DISAM Greenbook, 1-1. Definition first approved in JP 1-02, 09 June 2004.

²¹² DISAM Greenbook. The total count of 97 programs is compiled from the DISAM Greenbook.

²¹³ Authorities is a term used to describe statutory and delegated powers. Andru E. Wall describes how authorities are derived in his article, “Demystifying the Title 10-Title 50 Debate: Distinguishing Military Operations, Intelligence Activities & Covert Action,” Harvard National Security Journal, vol. 3, January 2012. “Title 10 of the US Code created the Office of the Secretary of Defense and assigned the Secretary of Defense all “authority, direction and control” over DoD, including all subordinate agencies and commands (10 U.S.C., 113(b)). The President, in his role of Commander in Chief, may delegate through the Secretary of Defense additional responsibilities or “authorities” to US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). These statutory and delegated responsibilities fall under the general rubric of “authorities,” 87. Thus, authorities determine whether one has the statutory or delegated authority to conduct the activity in question. Secondly, an “approval” connotes concurrence of said activity from the requisite military or civilian leaders overseeing military activities.

Security assistance (DoD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 sub-programs
Global train and equip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 sub-programs • Includes "1206" Building Partner Capacity of Foreign Militaries & "1208" Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism
International armaments cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 sub-programs
Humanitarian assistance (HA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 sub-programs
Training and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 sub-programs
Combined exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 sub-programs • Includes Joint Combined Exchange for Training (JCET)
Military-to-military contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 sub-programs • Includes State Partnership Program (SPP)

Figure 8. Department of Defense Security Assistance Programs

Source: Created by author

Within the strategy aims and policy parameters, military engagement must employ suitable programs to pursue objectives. Returning to Clausewitz, these programs form a type of grammar for Phase Zero. Arranging and harmonizing these programs constitutes the tactics. Accomplishing this feat goes beyond standard professional military competencies. Implementing these programs in a sustained and synchronized manner is a challenge that requires tremendous knowledge outside of one's professional domain knowledge. Tensions arise when reasonably sound program implementation produces negative effects. The former Commander of US Pacific Command, Admiral (Ret.) Timothy Keating reflected on this lesson from a humanitarian assistance mission.

I wasn't in the [PACOM Commander] job two weeks and we had just deployed big white ships, big red crosses to Indonesia and engineers, doctors, nurses and veterinarians had gone ashore to take care of all manner ailments ... as so as I departed

the plane I'm prepared to bask in the glory following this visit ...the verbal bouquets came but they were somewhat muted and I was surprised by this. Finally, an [Indonesian] Ministry of Foreign Affairs guy pulled me aside and said, 'Listen, we really appreciate the big white ship with a big red cross but next time please find another way to get your doctors, your nurses, your engineers here because our people look at this [ship] as an unmistakable, visible, muscular sign of US presence. And they like what they see but then they look to the leaders of Indonesia—democratically elected leaders—and they see weakness on our part because we cannot provide [this].'²¹⁴

Admiral Keating's vignette humanizes the subtleties involved in achieving the right effect when executing humanitarian assistance and by extension, security cooperation events. Each of the 97 security cooperation programs has a lead agency for approval, execution, and oversight. In the case of security assistance, seven of its twelve programs are administered by DoD through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) "under the general control of the Department of State" as a component of Foreign Assistance.²¹⁵ These Department of Defense administered security assistance programs contain complex budgetary procedures, logistics, and other detailed programmatics. As a result, these security assistance programs are at times managed by logistic directorates (J4) within the combatant commands.²¹⁶ This byzantine system creates unfortunate byproducts: the chain of delivery for engagement can be extensive, bureaucratic, and extended so far across time, space, and organizations that the results are diluted, or worse, manipulated.²¹⁷ In this context, simply conceptualizing operational art is difficult enough. Implementation entails yet another level of complexity. The intended effects of Security Cooperation can easily get confused in these environments.

²¹⁴Timothy Keating, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), "US Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific Region," audio captured from panel discussion, 24 September 2012 (accessed on iTunes on 28 January 2012, 1:10:00 to 1:21:00).

²¹⁵DISAM Greenbook, 1-1.

²¹⁶US Pacific Command is one example where security assistance is executed under the auspices of the J4.

²¹⁷A04 with an Asia-Pacific experienced Special Forces officer, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 10 August 2012.

For special operations, Phase Zero programming is focused on a smaller number of these 97 programs. Over 50 percent of USSOF engagements in Phase Zero occur under the Joint Combined Exchange for Training (JCET) program.²¹⁸ JCETs are usually four to six weeks in duration with intimate tactical interactions between USSOF and host nation partners. Known as the workhorse of USSOF, the JCET itself an “ill-suited mechanism to build partner capacity and capability.”²¹⁹ A former TSOC operations officer, Colonel Greg Wilson, plainly stated, “JCETs are inadequate tools to build capacity. A new platform is needed.”²²⁰ JCETs retain their utility because they are convenient to program and resource for both USSOF and host nation units. Though legally used for such purposes, the JCET is a legacy construct that is crafted to principally benefit the US special operations unit in pursuit of regional familiarization and secondly benefit the partner hosting the exchange.²²¹ The principle shortcoming is that JCETs are episodic events that are subject to wide variations in host nation hosting units, regions, and desired capabilities. At their best, JCETs are flexible, short duration engagements that increase USSOF regional knowledge, improve host nation specific skills (counterterrorism, peacekeeping, small unit tactics), and strengthen relationships between participating personnel. With a clear notion of operational art and proper resourcing, JCETs can be integrated into a reliable vehicle that successfully links engagements to strategies. At their worst, JCETs are single events, unrelated to broader strategic aims, providing perishable tactical exchanges with little follow-on

²¹⁸The figure of 50 percent is the author’s estimate given the frequency of the JCET in light of other SOF venues, across all COCOMs. As described in the Thailand vignette, it is difficult to enumerate exact percentages given that engagement counting by event can portray a false picture of volume, capacity and effect. Numbers aside, the JCET is and remains the primary tool of USSOF to engagement host nation counterparts in Phase Zero environments.

²¹⁹US Army Special Forces Colonel Greg Wilson, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, August 2012.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹DISAM Greenbook, 1-20.

actions. Still worse, JCETs can be manipulated by host nation governments or militaries to accomplish ends sparsely related to mutual security goals. With a programmatic cycle of up to two years prior to execution, JCETs can be thoughtfully conceptualized as the former but easily end up as the latter.²²²

Formulating an operational art is possible using blended approaches through uniquely suited programs. The numerous US Phase Zero programs do provide certain strategic advantages. The wide range of programs and authorizations available to accomplish military engagement objectives are vast, well-funded, and span across multiple security disciplines and domains. However cumbersome or ill-suited these programs may be to singularly formulate an operational art, they do offer complementary means and methods to build engagement campaigns within host nations. In a well-conceptualized strategy, the skilled application of operational art involves blending the programs from different authorizations to include Title 22 (DoS), Title 10 (DoD) and Title 50 (Intelligence).²²³ Summarizing this challenge, an experienced special operations planner stated, “Yes, this is often a patchwork job with a few big wins and potentially a few dead ends. But often the missed opportunities are often from lack of imagination and creativity as much as the overly complicated programmatic.”²²⁴

Synchronization Challenge Three: Posture

The joint US military forces’ global posture evolves according to strategic aspirations, perceived security requirements, and current and emerging threats of the United States. Military posture is more than just forward bases, logistics and personnel. It also includes “relationships,

²²² Author experience in planning, programming and executing JCETs in the US Army Special Forces, 1997-2010.

²²³ Title 50, U.S.C. delineates intelligence responsibilities which includes both the CIA and DoD. Despite the usage, “Title 50” is not synonymous with CIA activities.

²²⁴ US Army Special Forces officer, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Kenny, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 6 August 2012.

activities, facilities, legal arrangements, and global demands.”²²⁵ Military force posture, reported to Congress annually, reflects the military-strategic views on where, how, and why US forces are best positioned within the modern strategic environment.²²⁶

In 500 BC, Chinese strategist Sun Tzu discussed the idea of *shih* or “strategic configuration of power.”²²⁷ *Shih* combines the concept of positional advantage with the intangibles of energy, momentum, force, influence, authority, and power.²²⁸ Similarly, US military posture in the Phase Zero environment calculates how to strategically configure US power to optimum effect. Giving context to *shih*, Strategists Henry Mintzberg and James Bryan Quinn declare, “the essence of strategy--whether military, diplomatic, business, sports (or) political ... is to build a posture that is so strong (and potentially flexible) in selective ways that the organization can achieve its goals despite the unforeseeable ways external forces may actually interact when the time comes.”²²⁹ In non-wartime situations, engagements carry a heavy burden for the achievement of strategic objectives. Thus, force *posture* becomes just as important as force *employment*.

USSOF Phase Zero posture is a source of friction. According to USSOCOM, the current system of posture, authorities, and force allocation is ill-suited to today’s security environment.

²²⁵Army Posture Statement (2009), available at www.army.mil/aps/09/information_papers/global_force_posture.html (accessed on 10 January 2012).

²²⁶Posture statements are issued annually by the armed services (including USSOCOM), and the combatant commands to the committees and subcommittees of the Senate and House of Representatives.

²²⁷Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1994) 142-145. Original text of *The Art of War* is attributed to the 500 BC time period. While there is no direct English language translation of “shih,” Sawyer cites the elements of shih as “circumstances, energy, latent energy, combined energy, shape, strength, momentum, tactical force, power, authority, influence, power, condition of power, force of circumstances, positional advantage, and purchase,” 144.

²²⁸*Ibid.*, 143.

²²⁹Mintzberg and Quinn, *Readings in the Strategy Process*, 8.

²³⁰ USSOCOM is seeking more flexibility to anticipate, deploy, and support appropriate special operations activities up to and including special operations-centric campaigns.²³¹ In a 2012 testimony to the House Armed Services Committee, Linda Robinson, a senior fellow on the Council of Foreign Relations, discussed the potential changes.

What is needed is greater agility in the review and approval process [for security assistance], since it can take up to two years in some cases... [another] major proposal tabled by USSOCOM would explicitly give USSOCOM a global area of responsibility, allow it to initiate requests for forces, and via a global employment order allow USSOCOM to shift assets among theaters with the concurrence of the geographic combatant command.”²³²

Using Quinn and Mintzberg’s concept, USSOCOM is focused more on *flexibility* aspect and less on raw *strength*. To improve special operations global agility, USSOCOM is proposing new methods to “integrate the steady-state with the contingency.”²³³ Proposed methods include revisions to the Unified Command Plan and how forces are assigned, apportioned and allocated to theaters of operation.²³⁴ In order to improve special operations campaigning in support of combatant commanders, a USSOCOM representative stated,

It is about posture and authorities ... the ability to conduct activities beyond that which is only threat-centric ... something with the qualities of a deployment order and an execution order that better enables the development of partnerships, establishing

²³⁰Eric Schmitt, “Elite Military Forces are Denied in Bid for Expansion,” *The New York Times*, 4 June 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/05/world/special-ops-leader-seeks-new-authority-and-is-denied.html?hp&_r=0 (accessed 15 December 2012).

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Robinson, “Testimony on Special Operations Forces,” 5-6.

²³³Author visit to USSOCOM in December, 2012. Quotes taken from an unclassified but sensitive briefing on global SOF posture. Author use authorized under Chatham House rules.

²³⁴JP 1-02. Assigned is “to place units or personnel in an organization where such placement is relatively permanent,” 23. Apportionment is “in the general sense, distribution of forces and capabilities as the starting point for planning,” 19. Allocation is “distribution of limited forces and resources for employment among competing requirements,” 14. These terms have extensive meaning and impacts on force posture. Further discussion, beyond this research project, requires a higher level of classification.

persistence presence where required, and posturing the greater SOF enterprise to support if needed ... to do so, we need a fresh look at thresholds and permissions.²³⁵

USSOCOM seeks to change the systemic force posture and employment paradigms to suit small, regionally aligned special operations teams. Their intent is to improve the authorities under which USSOF teams assess environments and if appropriate, employ capabilities.²³⁶ Linda Robinson stated, “It requires placing SOF teams out in troubled regions for extended periods so they can gain familiarity, knowledge, and relationships and then begin to execute solutions with the resident partners. This runs counter to the common tendency to wait until crises are full blown and action is imperative.”²³⁷

Special operations seeks improved force posture for both special warfare and surgical strike options. This means more agility to move intra and inter-theater and expanded authorities to engage partners or irregular forces. This request raised tensions within DoD, DoS and Congress about giving USSOF wider global latitude. In May 2012, USSOCOM’s initial request for revised authorities was rejected by the Congress and DoS.²³⁸ In April 2012, Admiral (Ret.) Timothy Keating said “I don’t fundamentally understand what needs fixing.”²³⁹

The 11 September 2012 attack on the US Consulate in Libya resulting in the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens brought greater visibility to the current posture and authority debate. An initial Department of State investigation was mute on the topic on how USSOF responded to

²³⁵ Author USSOCOM visit, December 2012. Use of direct quote authorized by briefer under Chatham House rules and verified in March, 2013 via email to author.

²³⁶ A21 with recently retired career SOF officer, interviewed by author, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 8 September 2012.

²³⁷ Linda Robinson, testimony to the House Armed Services Committee threats subcommittee meeting, July 11, 2012. Quote above is referenced from Sandra I. Erwin, “Special Operations Seeks Bigger Role in Conflict Prevention.”

²³⁸ Schmitt, “Elite Military Forces are Denied in Bid for Expansion.”

²³⁹ Ibid.

this crisis event.²⁴⁰ Others have called for an expanded investigation that looks beyond on-site facilities and security.²⁴¹ Discussing the absence of USSOF in the Benghazi incident, Lieutenant General John Mullholland, Deputy Commander of USSSOCOM stated. “Those [regional USSOF] forces worked as advertised. They were in place.”²⁴² Unstated, but implicit in these remarks, is that the current method of posturing and employing USSOF is ill-suited to capitalize on USSOF capabilities. Ultimately, USSOF teams were not alerted or postured in a manner quick enough to respond.²⁴³ “To be relevant in this security environment, you have to be ahead of the crisis,” Mulholland stated.²⁴⁴ If military force posture truly reflects the military-strategic views on where and how US forces move and act, then current paradigms need evaluation. This current debate shows the tensions of shifting US power projection paradigms to provide greater latitude for USSOF operations.

Summary: Phase Zero Tensions

This part charted the thicket of Phase Zero interests and tensions. Phase Zero is a mosaic of intent and action in a non-wartime environment. US policies, programs and posture set the theater for the pursuit of US interests. No less important are unique organizational cultures and the peculiarity of each host nation. Within this environment, special operations pursue direct and

²⁴⁰Department of State Accountability Review Board (ARB) chaired by Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering, unclassified report investigating the 11-12-2012 Attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/118488083/State-Department-Investigation-of-Benghazi-Attack-of-9-11-2012> (accessed 28 January 2013), 1-39.

²⁴¹Sarah Parnass, “Hillary Clinton Endures Brusque Questioning at Hearings,” *ABC News online*, 23 January 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/hillary-clinton-endures-brusque-questioning-hearings/story?id=18292329> (accessed 29 January 2013).

²⁴²Erwin, “Special Operations Seeks a Bigger Role,” 1.

²⁴³Accountability Review Board. The unclassified report does not fault USSOF. Reportedly, USSOF regional response teams were eventually positioned at Sigonella Air Base, Sicily. The timeline for alerting and posturing USSOF is not available in open source documents.

²⁴⁴Schmitt, “Elite Military Forces are Denied in Bid for Expansion.”

indirect power projection methods that operate within defense, diplomacy, and development realms. Adding further complexity is the extended timelines of Phase Zero operations, actions, and activities. The extended timelines degrade unity of purpose and challenge continuity. In Phase Zero environments, special operations operational art aspires to devise the right access, understanding, and engagement venues. Even when implemented perfectly, frictions are a inevitability where defense, diplomacy, development and host nation equities intersect.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations for Further Study

This monograph analyzed the intersection of operational art, special operations, and Phase Zero. The vignettes revealed the complexity and tensions among the three elements. From this examination, three conclusions were drawn.

The first conclusion is that the elements of operational art in Phase Zero requires the requisite policy, programs and posture in place *in order for* skilled military actions to be conceptualized and synchronized. A military operational art is simply not feasible without enabling policies, suitable programs, and feasible posture arrangements. *If* these prerequisites are met, *then* an operational art construct, however atypical, can be developed. Even so, special operations Phase Zero operational art remains intertwined with diplomatic principles, programmatic peculiarities, and prudent self-limitations when operating in sensitive, sovereign environments. Within this environment, operational art can be thoroughly frustrated (Indonesia), logically conceptualized and connected (Thailand), or in shadowy execution as a nascent campaign (Yemen). Each case demonstrates the attempt—and challenges—of connecting engagements into a cohesive form of operational art.

The second conclusion is that Phase Zero presents a predictably grim environment for the consistent crafting of operational art. Without a declared theater of war, the free hand of the military operational artist is restrained. In such an environment, the effective synchronization of military operations, actions, and activities is difficult. Moreover, weaving effective military

actions into US diplomatic and developmental efforts presents its own challenges. In this case, the use of low footprint, culturally proficient, and adaptable special operations teams affords certain advantages. Special operations teams bring a high measure of entrepreneurship, autonomy, and technical skill. These qualities assist in the dynamic bottom-up and top-down collaboration required to construct a suitable engagement strategy inside a sovereign foreign country.

Regardless of the the skill of the participant, operational art often cannot develop in such a complex environment. In these situations, Phase Zero practitioners must form the constituent parts of Phase Zero—plans, policies, posture, and capabilities--into the best possible consistent and coherent engagement.

The third conclusion is that operational art is possible in Phase Zero. Incremental policies, programs and actions, when bound together by skilled practitioners, do constitute a type of Phase Zero campaign. Such campaigns, when meaningfully connected to strategic objectives, show clear aspects of *non-wartime* operational art. In environments where a large US presence is not suitable, special operations approaches offer an alternative method of connecting Phase Zero tactics to strategy. With proper forces, programs, authorities and suitable conditions, Phase Zero practitioners arguably have the components to devise and execute an effective operational art.

The development of a Phase Zero operational art – and within that category, special operations operational art - has clear implications. If the US strategic environment favors engagement as the main method of securing US interests abroad, then the “art and science” of Phase Zero actions are a key factor in success or failure. As discussed, the application of military power in Phase Zero is an interdisciplinary and interagency practice. For their part, USSOF provide unique capabilities and approaches in this environment. Improving the conceptualization and execution of special operations in Phase Zero is critical to maximizing the strategic utility of US engagements.

Operational art, in both doctrine and practice, is still largely viewed in the domain of mid or high intensity conflict. One suggestion for further study is examining amended concepts of operational art for Phase Zero. A second suggestion is an examination of the joint doctrine elements of operational art. A thorough analysis of the thirteen elements of operational art might reveal new insights about the language and logic required to craft Phase Zero operational art. Further study is required on effectively merging the inputs of diplomacy, development, and defense within host nations. Special operations, by theory, doctrine, and practice spans across these the “3D” realms. An improved operational art construct for special operations in Phase Zero is one small step toward improving the strategic impact of US engagement abroad. The sum of US global engagements, no matter how well conceived and synchronized, are unlikely to replace the strategic clarity of a singular grand strategy. However, improved engagement strategies, enabled by a sound Phase Zero operational art, provide clear strategic advantages for advancing US interests.

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