Synthesizing the Relationship Between Gendarmerie-type Forces and SOF

Erik J. de Waard, Faculty of Military Sciences, Netherlands Defense Academy, Breda; **Funs Titulaer**, The Netherlands Ministry of Defense, The Hague, The Netherlands; **Major Michiel F.D. Rovers**, Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, The Hague, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Recent international military deployments have shown the prevalence of population-centric task settings. For Special Operations Forces (SOF), engaging with local populations is part of their nature. The undisputed existence of a separate Civil Affairs branch within SOF proves the military relevance of knowledge and skills on the civilian domain. Bridging the gap between police and military, gendarmerie-type forces (GTF) also have a strong societal focus. The rise of population-centric missions has increased the popularity of GTF, since they can conduct critical public order tasks for which the military is not traditionally equipped. This article aims to analyze if collaboration between SOF and GTF could be beneficial. Based on two empirical cases, namely the village stability operations program in Afghanistan and SOF in a civilian law enforcement role, occurring public order issues will be unraveled. These insights are then used to fuel a discussion on how collaborating with GTF could help SOF overcome such problems.

KEYWORDS

population-centric operations; village stability operations; civilian law enforcement; public order; gendarmerie-type forces; inter-agency approach

Introduction

Recent international military deployments have shown the prevalence of population-centric task settings. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 confronted the U.S. and its coalition partners with serious public order issues caused by the dissolution of Saddam Hussein's power structure. In the years following the Kosovo War, the European Union (EU) established the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) to support the peace process and strengthen the rule of law in the newborn country.[1] Winning the hearts and minds of local populations through reconstruction and development activities was a key element of NATO's strategy in Afghanistan to weaken the Taliban's position.[2]

CONTACT Erik J. de Waard | ej.d.waard.01@mindef.nl

The UN-led Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) also pursued a strong security sector reform logic to help get the African nation back on its feet.[3] More recently, Russian Federation hostilities in Ukraine have deliberately targeted built-up inhabited areas to create social disruption, forcing the Ukrainian armed forces and their allies to focus on investigating war crimes, managing refugee streams, and addressing subversive elements.[4]

For Special Operations Forces (SOF), engaging with local populations is part of their nature. During World War II, under the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the U.S. government deployed specially trained military agents deep within enemy territory to gather strategic intelligence and organize local resistance groups.[5] Although large-scale conventional force structures dominated the military landscape during the Cold War, SOF proved invaluable in proxy wars around the globe, often training and professionalizing indigenous warring factions in far-off places to support overarching geopolitical objectives.[6] The existence of a separate Civil Affairs (CA) branch within the SOF community proves the military relevance of civilian knowledge and skills.[7]

Gendarmerie-type forces (GTF) also have a strong societal focus. Originating from the Napoleonic era to maintain law and order in weakly controlled rural areas, GTF bridge the gap between police and military functions.[8] GTF are mainly a result of Europe's turbulent state-building process, and as such, did not firmly take root in Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian countries. [9] Prominent examples include the French Gendarmerie, Italian Carabinieri, Spanish Guardia Civil, Austrian Federal Gendarmerie, and Netherlands Royal Marechaussee. The rise of population-centric missions has increased the popularity of GTF, as they perform critical public order tasks that traditional military forces are not equipped to handle, such as crowd control, combating organized crime, and reorganizing local police forces.[10]

Since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Western militaries have refocused on "traditional" warfare. At the same time, they continue to learn from Security Forces Assistance (SFA) experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. and UK are leading the way by institutionalizing dedicated SFA and warfighting units within their force structures. This is not the case for most other Western militaries. Consequently, a gap in military SFA capabilities could arise for them. Historically, SOF have filled such capability gaps.[11] Interestingly, for western states with GTF, however, there may be an opportunity to leverage these forces to complement SOF in bridging the SFA gap.

This article analyzes the potential collaboration between SOF and GTF, assuming that most special operations require non-SOF support to address the changing international security environment.[12] Scientific contemplations on the dynamics of the Grey Zone, as well as Hybrid Warfare, point to disrupting public order and stability through non-military means and approaches.[13] At the same time, the literature stresses that SOF units often lack sufficient knowledge of policing and legal aspects critical for population-centric engagements.[14] Moreover, strategic thinking on the future role of CA tends to be quite military-oriented, focusing on the traditional task dimensions of initial entry, reconnaissance, engagement and influence, and support to resistance.[15] Based on two

empirical cases—Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan and SOF in civilian law enforcement roles—this article will identify knowledge gaps and explore how collaboration with GTF can address these challenges.

SOF and Public Order Tasks

This section discusses two well-documented cases in which SOF were actively involved in population-centric activities. First, a combined analysis of Mark Moyar's study on Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan is conducted. Second, John Alexander's research on the concept of "convergence," referring to SOF being increasingly used for civilian law enforcement tasks, is scrutinized.[16]

VSO

Moyar, former director of the Office of Civilian-Military Cooperation at the U.S. Agency for International Development, extensively studied SOF deployment in Afghanistan. His research focuses on two counterinsurgency (COIN) programs: VSO and Afghan Local Police (ALP). These programs contemplate direct enemy-centric anti-terrorism efforts, with an indirect population-centric approach to securing the Afghan populace.[17] This section discusses his findings along two lines. First, the origin and rationale of the VSO and ALP programs will be described. Second, the main public order challenges that have emerged in relation to these programs will be explained.

VSO Origin

In support of the VSO concept, experts were asked to analyze the history of Afghanistan, paying attention to societal evolution in general and security-related developments in particular. This analysis showed that in a matter of decades—starting with the communist coup in 1978, followed by the Soviet intervention in 1979, and the internal struggle that began when the Soviets left in 1989—Afghanistan's traditional rural system of politics ceased to exist. Under this system, the central government funded local elites to keep the countryside quiet. With this funding, local militias could be established under community control (i.e., shuras or jirgas) and regulated by a tribal code of rules. What remained after the Soviet era was a country torn along ethnic and religious lines, with various warring factions fighting for self-interest, opportunistically coalescing and switching sides. With the support of Pakistan, the radical Islamist Taliban gained the upper hand in this domestic power play and, as of 1996, took control of most of the country. Granted refuge by Taliban rulers, the U.S. government decided to go after Osama bin Laden, founder of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda, in Afghanistan as retribution for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The U.S. deployed SOF to Afghanistan to ally with the Northern Alliance, which was a partnership of different ethnic groups fighting the Taliban. With a combination of SOF operators giving military advice and directing air support, the Northern Alliance was able to overthrow the Taliban regime in a matter of weeks. After this regime change, Western countries sent troops to Afghanistan under NATO command to help the U.S. with its global fight against terrorism but also to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven for extremism again.

The U.S. and coalition troops soon found themselves entangled in an intricate web of warlords, militias, ethnic groups, and local communities. When NATO troops drove insurgents out of a given area, the Afghan National Police (ANP) often proved incapable of preventing their return. The government-controlled ANP lacked the local knowledge, social ties, and, at times, the commitment needed to gain community support and develop sufficient situational awareness. Due to this poor performance, and inspired by COIN successes in Iraq, the SOF community became increasingly interested in the development of local security forces. Brigadier General Edward Reeder, Commander of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan, first introduced the idea of community self-defense, arguing that enhancing local security would thwart insurgents more effectively than anti-terrorist direct-action missions. Reeder's successor, Brigadier General Austin Scott Miller, embraced this vision and persuaded other senior commanders to adopt it. Miller coined the more population-centric approach, Village Stability Operations (VSO).

Departing from the assumption that improving living conditions at the local (i.e., village) level would undermine the insurgency's foundations, U.S. SOF teams were deployed in significant numbers to rural Afghanistan to empower local communities to participate in securing and developing their own areas actively. It is worth noting that the above-mentioned insights were not revolutionary; they had already been articulated by former British military officer and COIN expert Robert Thompson in his landmark book, which emphasized the trinity of "clear, hold, and build." [18] Over time, however, the practical realities of counterinsurgency as experienced during the 1950s and 1960s were oversimplified into a "hearts and minds" narrative.[19] The failure of this narrative underscored the inconvenient truth that hard security is a structural component within the "hold" phase of counterinsurgency.

The interconnection between security, governance, and development forms the heart of VSO. On one hand, development initiatives can only succeed when security and good governance are in place. On the other hand, security and development depend heavily on effective governance practices and structures. VSO aims to comprehensively address these three core aspects by focusing on two primary measures: (1) building a trusted and committed local security apparatus and (2) reintroducing shared community decision-making through shuras. The Afghan Local Police program was established to support the first objective, while the creation of shuras aimed to build viable governance systems capable of constructively addressing security and development issues in communities often plagued by ethnic and tribal rivalries.

SOF Challenges

Moyar identifies several weaknesses in the VSO/ALP program, which can be categorized into two main challenges.[20] The first challenge pertains to insufficient public order expertise. While the military professionalism and ascendance of SOF were critical in gaining community support for the VSO approach, the more complex task of mobilizing local support after the fighting proved less effective. SOF non-military knowledge and

skills were underdeveloped because selection and promotion processes did not explicitly consider criteria such as "the comprehension of foreign operational environments, the influencing of foreigners through interpersonal communications, and the solving of complex and ambiguous problems through creativity, flexibility, intuition, and judgment."[21]

At a broader level, the study shows that public order knowledge was primarily confined to the Civil Affairs (CA) branch, yet nearly all SOF elements in Afghanistan were involved, either directly or indirectly, in community-centric governance and development tasks. Moyar emphasizes that "these subjects [governance and development] deserve to be taught in depth to SOF beyond the civil affairs community." [22] In addition, rural residential areas formed the center of gravity of the VSO program. This aligns closely with the traditional indirect approach of building defense capacity from the bottom up, adhering to SOF's core principle of local empowerment. [23] However, villages and local communities are part of an overarching public order system.

Interestingly, VSO proponents and supporters lacked sufficient knowledge on incorporating the VSO program into a comprehensive public order system involving the district, provincial, and national levels. Consequently, public order successes at the community level could not be effectively leveraged and were often frustrated by administrative and judicial deficiencies higher up Afghanistan's governmental structure. Moyar argues:

> "One of the most important lessons of VSO and ALP was that permanent village stability required building partner capacity beyond the village level. The Afghan government needed capacity at the district and provincial levels in order to sustain the ALP once the Americans departed, and it needed capacity at the regional and national levels to manage the provinces and direct national programs and resources." [24]

Finally, VSO teams received information from regular U.S. intelligence organizations. These were not attuned to public order tasks because enemy-centric activities predominated their operational focus. The fine-grained human terrain analyses required to properly fathom the social dynamics of a local community could simply not be delivered. In his study, Moyar states:

> Targeting the enemy was a clearly defined and clearly attainable activity [of U.S. intelligence organizations]; an individual could be defined either as hostile or not hostile and an individual's location could be specified with precise grid points. Analyzing partner-nation leaders, on the other hand, lay outside the experience of much of the intelligence world, and the predominant collection resources were not aligned with that mission. It required subjective analysis of complex problems, with few clear-cut answers.[25]

Numerical capacity is a second major challenge. The fractal VSO approach of sending small SOF teams to residential areas and villages asked for a large investment in troops. Given Afghanistan's vast geography and the scarcity of SOF, expanding the VSO footprint was inherently problematic. To address this, senior commanders could not be fastidious

about which units to use. Ideally, CA officers would augment the regular SOF teams, but this preferred configuration was only possible in limited numbers due to the relatively small size of the CA branch. As a secondary measure, regular SOF teams without CA support were sent to the villages. Furthermore, when VSO efforts gradually took root and community demand increased, the U.S. military was forced to allocate regular troops to the program to meet the growing needs. Moyar explains that such capacity-driven compromises affected VSO efficacy:

> For the U.S. conventional forces assigned to VSO and ALP, governance and development expertise varied widely. Some of their personnel had been engaged in governance and development during prior tours in Iraq or Afghanistan and possessed experience in redirecting intelligence assets to the human terrain. But the conventional officers assigned to VSO and ALP had not been handpicked for the mission, so some of those selected lacked relevant experience. Most of them did not receive significant pre-deployment training in governance or development, resulting in complaints that the conventional forces personnel assigned to VSO and ALP were not adequately prepared for their jobs.[26]

Acknowledging this problem, Wilkins states that "with quality as the goal, future SOF leaders should abstain from the temptation to employ conventional infantry forces to amplify irregular warfare programs."[27]

Apart from delivering sheer numbers, VSO capacity also involves committing resources over an extended period of time. The success of the program hinged on a high level of trust between the local community and the VSO teams. In short, if locals feared that the Americans would abandon them too soon, they would not actively oppose the Taliban insurgents for the sake of their own security. This divergence of interests made it increasingly difficult to sustain unity of effort within the VSO program. This principal-agent problem of divergence has been noted by other scholars.[28] Following this reasoning, it becomes clear that the political priority of reducing the number of Western troops—focusing on an end date instead of an end state—placed a significant strain on the VSO program.[29] In this respect Moyar concludes:

> Plans for large-scale U.S. troop withdrawals from Afghanistan coincided with plans for expanding the ALP, which multiplied the burdens on coalition forces assigned to VSO and required accelerated transition of ALP sites to the Afghans. Experience showed that prolonged coalition presence as long as two years was usually required to build enough local capacity to ensure successful transition.[30]

SOF and Civilian Law Enforcement

Alexander has written a monograph on the growing participation of SOF in law enforcement operations, both domestically and internationally.[31] He points to four developments that have fueled this trend. First, he explains that America's global war on terrorism has resulted in a growing number of deployments aimed at preventing extremist groups from finding

sanctuary in internally divided and weakly governed countries. The previous account of the VSO program in Afghanistan is a typical example of this phenomenon. Alexander uses the term "overseas contingency operations," where SOF are typically used to strengthen the local security apparatus, capture suspects, collect evidence, and acquire intelligence.[32]

Second, the fight against international terrorism has exposed the nexus between terrorism and organized crime. Illegal drugs and arms trafficking are major funding sources of terrorism. In a transnational chain of interlocking criminal activities, organized crime syndicates and extremist groups consciously join forces.[33] As a result, the clear divide between external and internal security has gradually eroded.[34] Traditionally, external security has been the responsibility of the military, whereas internal security has largely been allocated to the police. SOF are increasingly called upon for domestic law enforcement tasks because of the merging of these two domains.[35]

Third, the level of violence exerted by organized crime groups is dramatically rising, triggering an arms race with law enforcement agencies. With the establishment of specialized units (e.g., SWAT), police forces are increasingly adopting a military way of operating and organizing, a phenomenon known as the "militarization of policing."[36] SOF have played a central role in training these units.

Fourth, Alexander notes that military assistance is provided to countries destabilized by pervasive criminality to fight the crime-terror nexus. [37] For example, in Colombia and Mexico organized crime groups have infiltrated all of society's arteries. With near impunity, they profit from a variety of illegal activities that pose a direct security hazard to the United States. [38] Based on bilateral agreements such as Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative, materiel support, military advice, and SOF training are used to disrupt organized, often drug-related, crime in the countries of origin.[39]

SOF Challenges

The growing involvement in law enforcement, both at home and abroad, presents several challenges for the SOF community—the most prominent being a lack of judicial procedural expertise. Knowledge of the legal aspects of mission execution, as well as details of criminal prosecution, is paramount when operating under civilian rule of law. Citing Alexander:

> In police academies across the country, recruits receive extensive instruction on civil and criminal law regarding the necessity for, and process of, obtaining warrants. Likewise, they are carefully schooled on the preparation and delivery of testimony in courts of law. They learn in excruciating detail all of the pressures that may be brought in cross-examination by defense attorneys. Unfortunately, SOF operators receive no such training and education. When asked how they learned about the conduct of raids that were bound by warrants and other legal constraints, or how they learned to give testimony in court, all stated they had none. Everyone interviewed for this project, who was involved in these

> operations, indicated they learned the process by trial and error after they were engaged in the process.[40]

The issue of personal liability makes bridging this knowledge gap even more important. When conducting law enforcement tasks, individual SOF operators must be protected from legal prosecution. To avoid lawsuits, police forces maintain detailed training records to prove that individual officers are professionally up to date. Within the SOF community, however, training repositories are mostly focused on the hard skills associated with direct-action operations.

The second challenge concerns a lack of expertise in the collection and processing of biometric evidence. Correctly handling evidence is a part of every police officer's DNA. Improper conduct may lead to evidence being ruled inadmissible in court. When it comes to evidence collecting in a military expeditionary context, SOF are mostly the first security actors on the spot. In Iraq, they mostly relied on eyewitness testimony in court. Alexander states the following:

> The main testimony by these American troops is to place the suspect at the scene and confirm the existence of weapons, explosives, or other contraband found at the site of the apprehension. This witnessing is often accomplished by having photographs of the SOF personnel and suspects at the scene with the material that was taken into evidence.[41]

However, such an approach is legally questionable in today's domestic law enforcement context. Advances in biometrics, including DNA, iris scans, and facial recognition, have made forensic evidence a dominant factor in court trials. However, such an approach is questionable in today's domestic law enforcement context. Given that SOF personnel will likely continue to be involved in isolating and protecting vital evidence in different operational contexts, more intensive training in forensic science and producing evidence is paramount.

Third, Alexander mentions the notion of preparedness. Where the Posse Comitatus Act strictly restricts the use of federal military forces on U.S. soil, the Patriot Act, which was introduced after the 9/11 terror attacks, made it much easier for the U.S. government to address the terrorist threat militarily within its domestic boundaries. The Patriot Act, being a temporary legislative measure, was repealed by the U.S. government in 2019. Still, the whole endeavor shows that in the event of a major domestic security contingency, legal changes are made easily, implying that SOF should be prepared to shift between external and internal security task settings without compromising operational readiness and performance. Alexander argues as follows:

> if significant escalation occurs and/or the advent of terrorist attacks in which the actors strike multiple targets with the intent on holding buildings of other facilities, then it may be necessary to consider employing SOF elements domestically. Posse Comitatus Act, acknowledged, it would be better to contemplate these options now rather than being called in after the event has

unfolded. It is the expansion of the drug cartels that could easily force such a scenario.[42]

Discussion

The VSO and law enforcement cases make clear that public order tasks can be troublesome for SOF. In a sense, they show that SOF have become victims of their own success. Generally speaking, in the event of an extraordinary security situation, SOF are the first to be called upon. The SOF label, after all, signifies the ability to conduct special tasks that regular security actors cannot undertake. However, the notion of being "special" has evolved over time. Originally, during World War II, Special Forces had to execute missions unsuitable for regular military units, such as reconnaissance operations deep in enemy territory, hit-and-run assaults, sabotage, and supporting partisan groups.[43] Defense analyst Michael Fitzsimmons formulates the core specialty of SOF as follows: "They are stealthy and capable of operating independent of support and therefore can often penetrate denied areas that would be inaccessible to other forces."[44]

Based on their key characteristics of being team-based, versatile, self-reliant, extremely fit, and highly professional, the range of SOF missions has broadened and diversified as the years passed.[45] Ruling SOF doctrine lists a related mixture of enemy-centric and population-centric core activities, namely direct action, counterterrorism, foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, special reconnaissance, psychological operations, CA operations, information operations, and counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.[46] In today's environment, where asymmetric threats dominate, SOF remains a crucial part of the security response.[47] Interestingly, many of these new "hybrid" threats stay below the threshold of officially declared war. State and non-state adversaries use propaganda, military activities, economic pressure, social provocations, cyberattacks, and political influence to exert power.[48] However, the ambiguous and multifaceted nature of hybrid threats has led to the conclusion that SOF alone cannot address such security challenges.

The required expertise—spanning social media dynamics, cyber tactics, languages, foreign cultures, religions, and global micro-regions—is so diverse that it simply cannot all be found in one single organizational entity.[49] Consequently, strategic thinkers argue that to truly leverage SOF's capabilities in a hybrid context, a customized collaborative multi-agency approach is needed. [50] The aim is to create a synergistic mixture of different complementary specialties, including SOF. Content-wise, public order plays a pivotal role in countering hybrid aggression. Stable societies, built on credible and legitimate governmental institutions, are less vulnerable to hybrid aggression than poor, politically unstable states, where chaos and anarchy create a window of opportunity for malicious actors to engage in subversive activities.[51]

Knowing that hybrid conflicts require an interagency approach—where SOF and other elements collaborate to safeguard, improve, or restore public order—highlights the value of gendarmerie-type forces (GTF) as promising partners. GTF occupy the middle ground between the military and the police. It is important to note that the military police (MP) branch and GTF, while similar, are not the same. Both entities are trained and equipped to

execute key policing tasks in support of overarching military operations, including (1) policing the force, (2) mobility support, (3) detention, (4) security, and (5) stability policing. What sets GTF apart is its additional domestic role in maintaining public order under civilian law, such as border control, rural policing, high-risk security, combating organized crime, riot control, and addressing cross-border economic crime.[52] Having their roots in Europe's nation-building process following the French Revolution, GTF were primarily introduced in countries under Napoleonic rule. As such, GTF are not common assets among all Western militaries. Today, countries such as France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Romania, and Poland have incorporated GTF into their forces.[53]

GTF are seen as valuable tools for addressing the security gap in modern policing contexts, both nationally and in international conflicts.[54] Civilian police forces are ill-suited for coping with situations of open or simmering armed conflict.[55] Due to their military training and heavier equipment, GTF offer a robust alternative, capable of seamlessly cooperating with regular military troops when violence reaches its peak. However, despite their paramilitary characteristics and combat potential, GTF are not a typical fighting element. Their primary goal is restoring order, focusing on de-escalating violence. This restrained use of force makes GTF ideal for population-centric activities.

According to retired Air Force Colonel Michael Dziedzic, the security gap for which GTF can be used manifests in three ways: (1) a deployment gap, (2) an enforcement gap, and (3) an institutional sustainability gap.[56] A deployment gap refers to the time lag in deploying an operational civilian police contingent during peace processes following armed conflict. This time window is particularly risky due to the high likelihood of hostilities reigniting or lawlessness taking hold in a war-torn region lacking a functioning local security apparatus and where weapons are readily accessible. An enforcement gap refers to the lack of capabilities to address activities that fall between major combat operations and non-violent community policing. To fill this security void in the aftermath of armed conflict, robustness, scalability, and a broad law enforcement repertoire are crucial to properly deal with political-criminal power structures, rogue intelligence organizations, warlords, fanatical religious groups, or global terrorists trying to actively undermine the peace process. Opposed to the first two gaps, the institutional gap does not primarily refer to a post-conflict public order void. The institutional gap concentrates on the issue of creating sustainable security within a country. This requires a long-term perspective of political development, comprehensively addressing the complete legal chain, from law-making to enforcement, justice administration, and imprisonment. Delivering justice for all citizens mitigates the risk of simmering public discontent that can lead to institutional collapse and conflict. It is important to add, however, that institutional gaps do not only emerge in weak states. The blurring of internal and external security has also created institutional judicial vacuums in Western countries with well-established legal systems.[57] As such, improving national security frameworks in response to domestic concerns such as pervasive criminality, refugee streams, and radicalization and extremism, has become a major point of concern in many developed nations.[58]

GTF and SOF

Peter Neuteboom offers an overview of the activities that GTF can execute to help bridge the different security gaps.[59] He differentiates between formal public order (e.g., crowd and riot control), law enforcement (e.g., criminal investigations), and miscellaneous activities aimed at signaling, preventing, or deescalating social disturbances (e.g., advise and training). Based on this repertoire and the accompanying set of equipment, GTF could be a useful partner for SOF too. For population-centric tasks, it might, for example, be worthwhile to have a provost marshal office in the SOF command and control structure to provide decision-making support with expertise in law enforcement and public order. Another approach could be augmenting SOF teams on the ground with gendarmerie specialists to enhance performance through policing knowledge and specialized skills, techniques, and equipment. The strategic use of non-lethal weapons, for instance, could help SOF to be coercive, while preventing the risk of public sentiment backfiring. To improve SOF scalability, partnering with GTF is an intriguing option. Combining GTF and SOF resources creates a far larger base for population-centric operations. This numerical advantage could be exploited in several ways. For example, a phased approach might allow SOF teams in VSO-like settings to be relieved by GTF units if the security situation stabilizes. Alternatively, the two forces could work in complementary roles. A good example in this respect is the recent contingency that took place in Afghanistan at Kabul International Airport. Many countries deployed a national SOF element to execute a Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) when the Taliban retook control over the country. The television images showed that these relatively small units were overwhelmed by massive crowds attempting to gain access to the airport to escape the country. GTF, with their training and equipment for crown control, could have provided both the mass and tactics needed for dealing with such crowds. Such a partnering force would have given SOF far more leeway in conducting pinpoint actions, such as escorting national citizens to safety.[60]

Tactical collaboration between SOF and GTF requires, above all, joint training programs to foster integration, interoperability, and interdependence.[61] Additionally, former Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence David Gompert suggests investing in a more flexible force structuring approach to better deal with today's multi-faceted and uncertain security environment. More precisely, he proposes a basic design of a core combat nucleus (i.e., SOF) complemented with additional capabilities.[62] These complementary elements are schematically presented in two concentric circles: core joint capabilities and regular service building blocks. Core joint capabilities refer to supporting elements that are likely to be needed by the combat nucleus during deployment. Regular service building blocks, while less critical, can also be called upon but may require more preparation time. Given the increasing focus on population-centric tasks with a variety of judicial complexities, GTF could reasonably be included in SOF's primary support circle of core joint capabilities. Establishing such a formal interrelationship would enable both communities to strengthen their collaboration and grow together.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the collaboration potential of SOF and GTF. Because this topic is relatively underdeveloped in academic literature, empirical cases of U.S. SOF dominate this work. In particular, the case on SOF and domestic law enforcement has a strong United States focus because of its connection with the war on drugs strategy. It is therefore uncertain whether the U.S. experiences with employing SOF domestically or in expeditionary roles to combat drug-related crime are directly applicable to other Western countries. Despite this bias, security literature in general paints a convincing picture of internal and external security merging. It emphasizes that law enforcement and public order will no longer be the sole responsibility of police forces; increasingly, the military will also have to play its part. Indeed, the VSO and domestic law enforcement case make clear that SOF are already actively involved in tasks where military and policing activities intertwine. Although population-centric behavior is, generally speaking, a well-developed SOF trait, the cases also bring to the fore that many of today's task settings have a strong civilian law enforcement dimension for which SOF are less prepared. To maximize the unique capabilities of SOF in a civilian law enforcement context, this article introduces GTF as a promising enabling partner. GTF conduct public order tasks daily under civilian law, but, owing to their semi-military status, also possess the knowledge and robustness to manage social disturbances in contested environments in collaboration with military units. This dual-headedness makes GTF an ideal complementary partner for SOF, as civilian law enforcement techniques, tactics, equipment, and knowledge can, in a plug-and-play fashion, be added to the operational portfolio under varying circumstances. Lastly, it is interesting to note the similarities between the 19th-century origins of GTF and the realities of contemporary COIN and SFA missions. In a way, one could argue that the call to add GTF to SOF's operational repertoire marks a modern-day, expeditionary return to the early state-building logic that gave rise to GTF.

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