

Getting Smart in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
Exploring the Application of Smart Power in Deterring Insurgencies  
and Violent Non-State Actors

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Abstract

In the 21st Century, violent non-state actors continue to pose an asymmetric threat to state actors. Given the increasing proliferation of lethal technologies, growing global social connectivity, and continued occurrences of failed or failing states, the quantity of violent non-state actors posing threats in global hotspots is likely to increase. The United States, already facing strategic overreach due to conflicts in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, will face enormous difficulties in engaging militarily against a multitude of violent non-state actors. Smart power, a selective employment of hard and soft power applications, presents an opportunity to limit and deter violent non-state actors in a resource-constrained environment. Smart power, previously viewed through a largely state-on-state lens must be looked at through the paradigm of containing and engaging violent non-state actors.

Getting Smart in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
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Non-State Actors

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General Audience Abstract

Modern nation-states must contend with an asymmetric threat from violent non-state actors. In this thesis, an asymmetric threat is viewed as a threat in which the conventionally weaker opponent gains an undue advantage given their commensurate strength. Violent non-state actors are defined in this thesis as non-state armed groups that resort to organized violence as a tool to achieve their goals. Given the increasing proliferation of lethal technologies, growing global social connectivity, and continued occurrences of failed or failing states, the quantity of violent non-state actors posing threats in global hotspots is likely to increase. The United States, already facing strategic overreach due to conflicts in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, will face enormous difficulties in engaging militarily against a multitude of violent non-state actors. Smart power, the employment of a variety of power applications [i.e. air strikes, coalition building, diplomacy, foreign aid, etc.], presents an opportunity to limit and deter violent non-state actors in a resource-constrained environment. Smart power, previously viewed through a largely state-on-state lens must be looked at through the paradigm of containing and engaging violent non-state actors

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## Preface

“Leadership is the art of getting someone to do something you want done because he wants to do it”  
- U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower

The last conventional armed conflict the United States was involved in was the 2003 invasion of Iraq when American forces tore through Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard. The U.S. has, however, been involved in no less than seven "brushfire wars" or conflicts with violent non-state actors (in Libya, Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and Iraq and Afghanistan again). The unconventional fight has now become the standard, or the norm. Armed conflict between state actors and violent non-state actors (VNSAs) has become far more common than state-on-state war. As conflicts between violent non-state actors and state actors increase in frequency and normalcy, so too does their number. There are literally hundreds of conflicts ongoing between VNSAs, state actors, or some amalgamation of the two. From the Islamic State group militants fighting the Iraqi and Syrian governments to the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India, VNSAs currently dominate the live fighting that is occurring around the globe.

The United States, despite being rivaled economically by a rising China and India, remains the world's lone superpower. Additionally, the U.S. still outpaces the rest of the world in defense expenditures by a wide margin. Thanks to a fairly interventionist-heavy strategy over the last seven decades, the United States finds itself engaged overtly in three conflicts in 2016 (Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan). This is not including

intervention through use of drone attacks, espionage, intelligence support, and Special Forces, which includes but is not limited to Pakistan, Yemen, Nigeria, and Somalia. Every one of these conflicts is centered on assisting largely U.S.-friendly central governments in fighting violent non-state actors. This high operational tempo is wearing on the U.S. military and degrading its ability to deter and fight conventional enemies such as Russia and China if the situation were to arise. The United States can ill afford to keep engaging in conflicts on multiple fronts against numerous enemies that change form and appearance but still follow the same ideology. The amount of global conflicts involving violent non-state actors will only increase over the next half century or longer. Despite being the largest and arguably most capable armed force in the world, the U.S. military cannot police the world and use hard power in every “hotspot” that may threaten U.S. interests. It is important today to consider the role of soft power elements being coupled with hard power components to deter and limit violent non-state actors around the world.

The purpose of this study is to explore a “new” approach in inhibiting and reducing violent non-state actors.

This thesis is organized into six sections. In the introduction, I will address the asymmetric threat facing the United States and other large state actors from non-violent state actors as well as the challenges in countering this “untraditional threat.” Then, I will discuss countering asymmetric threats to state actors from violent non-state actors. I will expound upon the inherent limitation in attempting to counter the Islamic State and similar violent non-state actors through solely military means. In my introduction I will justify my investigation of the threat posed from violent non-state actors and

recommend exploring the use of “smart power” ventures to limit and mitigate the existential threat of VNSAs.

In the first chapter I present the background of the Islamic State and a timeline of the organization’s rise to power and prominence in Iraq and Syria. Following this background and timeline, I will proceed to show the threat and challenges presented by the Islamic State. Additionally, I will analyze the assessed long-term plans and objectives of the group as well as how they affect its chances of success. The chapter will close by considering how the Islamic State has evolved from an Iraqi chapter of al Qaeda to a more powerful violent non-state actor. Through this chapter, I will provide context to the most prominent current threat from a violent non-state actor in order to better frame the research problem.

In the second chapter I examine the principles of both soft and hard power. I review the strengths and weaknesses in both approaches. Additionally, I will review several examples of instances where each approach has been successful and instances where they have failed. Finally, in this chapter, the concept of smart power is defined using existing literature on the subject. The goal of this chapter is to add context to the concepts of hard, soft, and smart power.

In the third chapter, I review various historical applications of smart power in conflicts with violent non-state actors. The aim of this chapter is to extract lessons learned from both successful and failing applications of smart power. Through this chapter I hope to contextualize the concept of smart power with real world examples, especially as it pertains to violent non-state actors.



In the fourth chapter I review prospective future options in applying smart power in order to deter or limit a violent non-state actor. I assess the probable strengths and weaknesses in each option, as well as possible pitfalls, dilemmas, or setbacks. At the end of the chapter, I explore how these facets of smart power could be effective or, conversely, ineffective against a violent non-state actor. This could present a multitude of smart power options that may be extremely effective against both the Islamic State group and future violent non-state actors. The objective of this chapter will be to present a feasible approach to contain the ever more-recurring threat of a violent non-state actor.

The final chapter discusses the difficulties and possible setbacks state actors face in applying “smart power” applications to limit and deter violent non-state actors in the 21st Century. This includes conclusions drawn from examples listed in congruence with the review of the Islamic State and possible U.S. applications of smart power to build capacities against violent non-state actors. In addressing the asymmetric threat from violent non-state actors and identifying smart power options that can be used to deter and limit such a threat, I hope to provide valuable input into what crucial actions could be advantageous in the United States' and other states' strategies moving forward.

## **Introduction: The Challenge in Deterring the Asymmetric Threat from Violent Non-State Actors**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the asymmetric threat that the United States and other state actors are perpetually facing in the current international environment. This environment is dynamic and interconnected. Traditional state borders continue to fade as conflicts, such as the one between Syrian regime forces, Syrian rebel groups, Kurdish forces, the Islamic State group, and Iraqi Security Forces spread across entire regions. Conflicts between state actors and violent non-state actors (VNSAs) are not limited to one-on-one, but frequently involve multiple state actors and violent non-state actors (some acting as proxies for state actors). The complexity from these multi-front and multi-domain conflicts already presents a significant challenge to state actors when attempting to deter violent non-state actors; this challenge is exacerbated by the asymmetric advantage violent non-state actors hold in such conflicts. The asymmetric advantage, or threat, will be explained in this chapter.

This chapter will explicate the challenges and complexities present in deterring and limiting violent non-state actors threatening the United States and her allies over the last 15 years following the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. However, in this thesis, examples as far back as the post-World War II time period will be examined and utilized. The objective of this thesis is to identify the persistent asymmetric threat from violent non-state actors and explore the possible application of “smart power” in deterring and limiting this threat.

In order to delve into the asymmetric threat presented from violent non-state actors it is necessary to define these terms at the onset. The meanings ascribed to asymmetric threat and VNSAs varies greatly from organization to organization and person to person. The connotation for each term can be fluid depending on how the author wishes to employ them. In order to maintain consistency the following definitions will be utilized through the entirety of the thesis.

For the purpose of this thesis, "asymmetric threat" will be defined according to a report published by the Strategic Studies Institute titled, "Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts." In the report, Dr. Steven Metz and Dr. Douglas Johnson provide a somewhat broad-brush definition of asymmetry as it relates to warfare and threats: "In the realm of military affairs and national security, asymmetry is acting, organizing, and thinking differently than opponents in order to maximize one's own advantages, exploit an opponent's weaknesses, attain the initiative, or gain greater freedom of action. It can be political-strategic, military-strategic, operational, or a combination of these. It can entail different methods, technologies, values, organizations, time perspectives, or some combination of these. It can be short-term or long-term. It can be deliberate or by default. It can be discrete or pursued in conjunction with symmetric approaches. It can have both psychological and physical dimensions."<sup>1</sup>

In essence, asymmetry gives an otherwise weaker opponent, considerable strength in a realm where the stronger conventional opponent is less developed, less enforced, or less focused. The weaker actor can have strategic, operational, or tactical

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<sup>1</sup> Metz, Steven, and Douglas Johnson II. "Asymmetry and U.S. Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts." Strategic Studies Institute. Accessed July 6, 2015.

overmatch against the stronger actor. An asymmetric threat exists when the weaker opponent can utilize that advantage or overmatch and exploit the weaknesses in the stronger opponent. Yes.

If defining asymmetry or asymmetric threats is convoluted and difficult to decipher then finding a universally agreed upon definition of violent non-state actors (VNSAs) is akin to finding a needle in a haystack. However, for the purpose of this thesis, violent non-state actors will be defined as described in the collection of essays titled "Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics". In the volume edited by Klejda Mulaj, she defines VNSAs as, "non-state armed groups that resort to organized violence as a tool to achieve their goals." While this definition is seemingly clear cut, Mulaj classifies the VNSAs into five primary categories: 1) "National liberation movements confronting an occupying force and/or separatist movements seeking to secede from a state"<sup>2</sup> (i.e. the Irish Republican Army, the Sudan People's Liberation Army), 2) "Insurgent guerilla bands which are engaged in a protracted political and military struggle"<sup>3</sup> (i.e. Hezbollah, the Taliban, Jaish al-Mahdi), 3) Terrorist groups who spread fear through the threat or use of violence - mainly against civilians (i.e. al-Qaeda, Boko Haram), 4) Militants made up of irregular but recognizable armed forces (i.e. Somali warlord forces), and 5) Mercenary militias.<sup>4</sup> The categories, however, are not mutually exclusive. VNSAs can transform and evolve/devolve into a number of different forms. Some, like the Islamic State group, may blur the lines and span over multiple categories at a time. The Islamic State group can be seen as an insurgent guerilla band, a terrorist group, and as militant

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<sup>2</sup> "Introduction." In *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, edited by Kledja Mulaj. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

made up of irregular but recognizable armed forces (many military formations of the Islamic State group had fought as a largely uniformed group<sup>5</sup>).

In order to explore options in deterring and limiting violent non-state actors is it important to emphasize the intrinsic connections between VNSAs and the idea of an asymmetric threat. At the core of the asymmetric threat (or approach) is the fundamental need to maximize the (often limited) strengths one has and exploit the weaknesses an enemy has. Theoretically, this approach can be utilized by a multitude of different actors, from large, centralized state actors to small, decentralized non-state actors. However, the asymmetric threat is far more lucrative and fitted to VNSAs.

Take, for instance, the 2011 Taliban downing of a helicopter carrying 30 American service members (17 Navy SEALs, five Naval Special Warfare support Sailors, five Army Soldiers, three Airmen), seven Afghan National Army Commandos, one Afghan civilian interpreter, and one military working dog. The 30 American deaths are the greatest U.S. loss in a single incident/attack over the entire 11-year war in Afghanistan. It has been assessed that the CH-47 Chinook was shot down with a fairly simple rocket propelled grenade (RPG). Navy SEALs are considered some of the most elite commandos in the world and 17 of the most elite (from the famed SEAL Team Six/DEVGRU) were killed with a highly proliferated, cheap, and simplistic weapon.<sup>6</sup> The Taliban were able to use two of their strengths (a small tactical footprint and a thorough understanding of the available avenues of approach) to take advantage of several

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<sup>5</sup> Tomlinson, Simon. "From the 'Afghani Robe' to the Suicide Bomber's All-Black Uniform, How ISIS Differentiates between Ranks with Various Outfits ." Daily Mail. September 29, 2015. Accessed May 22, 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3253113/From-Afghani-robe-suicide-bomber-s-black-uniform-ISIS-differentiates-ranks-various-outfits.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Tait, Paul. "What Happened on Night of Deadly Afghanistan Helicopter Crash?" Reuters. August 10, 2011. Accessed July 12, 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/10/us-afghanistan-crash-idUSTRE7792ET20110810>.

American weaknesses (predictable operating procedures and reliance on helicopter transport to operations in heavily mountainous terrain).

An asymmetric advantage does more than level the playing field for violent non-state actors. It allows them to shape the battlefield or operational environment (OE) so that it favors them. Oftentimes, this asymmetric approach will bring about tactical victories that have strategic implications. For instance, insurgents using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) or explosively formed penetrators (EFPs) caused incredible damage and significant casualties to U.S. soldiers riding in American military Humvees.<sup>7</sup> This effect caused the American people and legislators to push for up armored vehicles to better protect American troops. The high cost of these vehicle upgrades contributed to a constantly growing expense of the Iraq War, which in turn caused national will for the war to erode.<sup>8</sup>

The manner in which states or nations interact with one another has evolved over centuries of peace, war, and everything in between. Nation-state actors have learned to effectively deal with hostile state actors through the threat of deterrence. States have also had to cope with non-state actors such as insurgent movements, terrorist organizations and secessionist movements, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries. States have had difficulties battling such non-state actors for hundreds of years. Non-state actors, especially violent ones, often cannot be deterred through pure aggression, intimidation, or even threat of nuclear warfare.<sup>9</sup> While the U.S. and other Western militaries and intelligence organizations have made significant strides in the fields of

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<sup>7</sup> Conroy, Scott. "U.S. Sees New Weapon In Iraq: Iranian EFPs." CBS News. February 11, 2007. Accessed April 14, 2016. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-sees-new-weapon-in-iraq-iranian-efps/>

<sup>8</sup> Keyes, Charley. "Steep Cost of Military Vehicles Outlined in Army Report." CNN. January 27, 2011. Accessed April 22, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/01/27/army.vehicle.costs/>.

<sup>9</sup> Mulaj, 7-9

counterterrorism and counterinsurgency over the last 14 years, the asymmetric threat still poses a significant challenge. The challenge states face in today's world is how to deal with a non-state actor that is aspiring to be a state and performs some state functions, but also ignores international law and regularly uses terroristic attacks and political violence. One historical example, outside of the Islamic State, would be Hamas. Hamas has evolved from a terrorist group with a political wing and some humanitarian efforts into, in essence, becoming the de facto Palestinian state; it has been the governing authority in the Gaza Strip since 2007.<sup>10</sup> Hamas, in many ways seeks legitimacy far more than the Islamic State, but still eschews international laws, norms, and many pressures. How does one deter such an enemy or entity? The challenge is complex in nature.

This challenge presents itself perhaps most fully in the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) group. Is the Islamic State group actually a state? Is it a machination of Islamic radicals destined to fail? Is it a political movement that uses terroristic methods or is it a terrorist group with political aspirations? The Islamic State represents an enigma when looking at the way state actors and non-state actors interact. The Islamic State group, despite substantial losses over the summer of 2016, holds significant territory in Iraq and Syria<sup>11</sup>, had access to substantial oil resources<sup>12</sup>, and operates

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<sup>10</sup> Wilson, Scott. "Abbas Dissolves Government As Hamas Takes Control of Gaza." Washington Post. June 15, 2007. Accessed April 24, 2016. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/14/AR2007061400145.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "Institute for the Study of War Iraq Updates: ISIS Sanctuary Map: November 20, 2014." *Institute for the Study of War*. ISW, 20 Nov. 2014. Web. 21 Nov. 2014. <<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2014/11/isis-sanctuary-map-november-20-2014.html>>.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Khatteeb, Luay. "How Iraq's Black Market in Oil Funds ISIS." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 22 Aug. 2014. Web. 12 Nov. 2014. <<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/18/business/al-khatteeb-isis-oil-iraq/>>.

some governmental functions (health care, utilities, and welfare).<sup>13</sup> The group fights as an organized military in some battles (the Battle for Mosul, Iraq) while engaging in acts of terrorism in other instances (beheadings, improvised explosive device [IED] attacks, and torture).<sup>14</sup> The group considers itself a pan-Islamic caliphate that tears down former colonial borders and will operate as a true theocracy.<sup>15</sup> However, short of negotiating ransoms for hostages, IS has no seeming desire to engage in diplomacy or any form of nonviolent discourse with any state.

How can the United States hope to deter and limit a violent non-state actor that functions in the manner in which the Islamic State group does? Simply utilizing air strikes and counterterrorism methods will not deter a group with surreptitious leadership and a decentralized command structure. Though the Islamic State group is led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, it operates as an almost amorphous, leaderless organization capable of withstanding severe damage to its perceived leadership.<sup>16</sup> Al-Baghdadi may be the self-proclaimed Caliph, but this group bases less of its identity on al-Baghdadi than al-Qaeda did on Usama bin Laden. It took the United States military and intelligence services ten years to locate and kill Osama bin Laden after 9/11.

The U.S. cannot threaten the Islamic State group with economic sanctions because it does not engage in international trade or have international economic activity outside of selling oil on the black market. While threatening the group with a nuclear

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<sup>13</sup> Stewart, Megan A. "What's So New about the Islamic State's Governance?" *Washington Post*. 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 2 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/07/whats-so-new-about-the-islamic-states-governance/>>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibrahim, Azeem. *The Resurgence of Al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2014. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Zelin, Aaron Y. "The Islamic State's Archipelago of Provinces." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. The Washington Institute, 14 Nov. 2014. Web. 14 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-states-archipelago-of-provinces>>.

<sup>16</sup> "The Two Fates of the Islamic State." The Soufan Group. July 15, 2015. Accessed August 22, 2015. <http://soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-the-two-fates-of-the-islamic-state/>.



strike is possible it would be condemned internationally as incredibly heavy-handed and would surely result in catastrophic amounts of civilian casualties. The United States cannot coerce or leverage allies of the Islamic State because the Islamic State has no official allies outside of other violent non-state actors in other regions that have become affiliates, or veritable franchises (i.e. Boko Haram in Nigeria, Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid in Indonesia, al-Shabaab in Somalia, etc)<sup>17</sup>

Decades (if not centuries) of the experiences of states fighting violent non-state actors of all shapes and sizes have proved that very rarely can sheer military force degrade or effectively counter VNSAs. But how does one marginalize and largely disband VNSAs without getting mired in a decade-long conflict involving tens or even hundreds of thousands of the state actor's own troops? A war without seeming end can be viewed as not much more than a more drawn out defeat. Even if one discounts the first two iterations of the United States' conflict with/in Iraq, the United States has now been combating the Islamic State group for over two years and will likely remain engaged in Iraq for years to follow. The United States has already launched over 12,000 airstrikes against Islamic State group targets.<sup>18</sup> While the United States remains entangled in Iraq, inevitably, more conflicts and threats will arise in the foreseeable future. The United States cannot hope to engage all these problem areas with hard power. The limitations of budgets, tyranny of distance, and manpower shortfalls simply do not allow for a persistent global application of hard power.

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<sup>17</sup> "Islamic State's 43 Global Affiliates Interactive World Map." IntelCenter. December 15, 2015. Accessed January 27, 2016. <http://intelcenter.com/maps/is-affiliates-map.html#gs.Woht0RA>.

<sup>18</sup> Glenn, Cameron. "How Is the Air War against ISIS Going?" Newsweek. May 27, 2016. Accessed July 22, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/how-air-war-against-isis-going-462555>.

Though violent non-state actors are difficult to clearly categorize or oftentimes define, it is evident that the violence from these groups does not typically stem from one, central issue. Mercenary groups could possibly fall into that role as money is their main driver but even those groups have complex dynamics. The violence inflicted from a violent non-state actor such as Boko Haram results from a myriad of issues ranging from socio-economic differences in Nigeria, poor and corrupt governance, and the radicalization of Islam in large portions of the country and more generally in northern Africa. Multiple studies have been conducted in the hopes of determining the determining factors in what forms and drives violent non-state actors. Each study has come up with a multiplicity of results.

One of the better studies backed up with quantitative analysis was conducted by J. Bernhard Compton in the *Small Wars Journal*. Compton's "Violent Non-State Actors in the Middle Eastern Region" examined the two notions that: "that in order for a violent non-state actor (VNSA) group to arise, it must have (1) opportunity and (2) cause."<sup>19</sup> After running a robust data set through several models with varying restrictions, Compton concluded that a desire for self-sufficiency combined with extreme perceptions of governmental illegitimacy was a motivational force behind non-state actor violence. Additionally, the probability of non-state actor violence is increased in countries that have significant wealth distribution inequalities, "especially where the society is less ethnically and religiously homogeneous. However, it also appears that linguistic homogeneity in conjunction with these findings is also important."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Compton, J. Bernhard. "Violent Non-State Actors in the Middle Eastern Region." *The Small Wars Journal*, 2008. Accessed July 12, 2015. [www.smallwarsjournal.com](http://www.smallwarsjournal.com).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Considering the extremely complex genesis and nature of these violent non-state actors, this problem set cannot be addressed with a purely military strategy. While determining causation of VNSAs is an important topic, that is not the goal of this analysis. This thesis explores the application of “smart power” in deterring and limiting VNSAs in several conflicts throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. The previous applications of smart power that will be reviewed is the case of the U.S. against the Soviet Union, the U.S. role in the First Gulf War, and the U.S. intervention in Libya. The examples of smart power application will be examined for lessons learned. Additionally they will be explored for applicability to the United States fight against violent non-state actors in the future.

This thesis will seek to define smart power, determine what it can and cannot do, what it looks like in terms of real world application, and how it can be applied in United States attempts to limit and deter violent non-state actors who represent a significant asymmetric threat. There are several questions to consider when exploring smart power. Is smart power a realistic practice in the global security “toolkit”? Where has smart power been successful and where has it failed?

The United States military continues to shrink in both personnel<sup>21</sup> and hardware.<sup>22</sup> The number of violent non-state actors and separatist movements across the world continues to grow.<sup>23</sup> The United States cannot hope to engage every one of these “hotspots” with hard power. Current U.S. leadership and whoever occupies the

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<sup>21</sup> Tice, Jim. "Army Shrinks to Smallest Level since before World War II." *Army Times*. May 7, 2016. Accessed October 04, 2016. <https://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2016/05/07/army-shrinks-smallest-level-since-before-world-war-ii/83875962/>.

<sup>22</sup> Shalal, Andrea. "U.S. Army Says It Faces Huge Equipment, Training Risks with Budget Cuts." *Reuters*. October 13, 2014. Accessed October 04, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-military-army-idUSKCN0I21V620141013>.

<sup>23</sup> Bunker, Robert J. "Fighting Irregular Fighters: Defeating Violent Nonstate Actors." *U.S. Army War College: Parameters* Vol. 43, no. 4 (2013): 59.

White House after the 2016 Presidential election must consider a number of options in deterring and containing violent non-state actors with other than purely direct action military operations.

Throughout this thesis, I explore the alternative approaches the United States can take to counter the asymmetric threat the Islamic State presents. I will argue for utilizing what could be considered "conventional methods" (economic stabilization methods, diplomatic engagement [with host nations struggling with IS, such as Syria, Iraq, and Libya], foreign aid, humanitarian assistance, and even surgical air and missile strikes) in dealing with an unconventional threat.

*Feeding the World, Fighting Bad Governance, and Keeping the Lights On*

Using hard power against violent non-state actors risks treating symptoms rather than a disease. Violent, armed groups are fueled by marginalization, persecution, and disenfranchisement. In most conflicts occurring presently, there are systemic, underlying social and economic issues that are not easily remedied. This is why counterinsurgency experts such as David Kilcullen have argued for a whole of government, population-centric approach.<sup>24</sup> But what if that kind of approach used against violent non-state actors (be it insurgencies, separatist movements, or even terrorist organizations) were applied as enduring measures that seek not to defeat and degrade present threats but are aimed at limiting and deterring emerging violent non-state actors?

One need only look at Iraq in 2011 and beyond to assess how important faith in government and the sustainment of essential services to the populace are. The rise of

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<sup>24</sup> Kilcullen, Dave. "Two Schools of Classical Counterinsurgency." Small Wars Journal. January 27, 2007. Accessed October 04, 2016. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/two-schools-of-classical-counterinsurgency>.

the Islamic State will be covered in the next chapter but some of the driving forces behind its emergence were: 1) The persecution and marginalization of Sunnis by the Maliki-led Shi'a-dominated central Iraqi government, 2) A failure to provide security and some essentials to the Iraqi citizenry (clean water, electricity, and aid), and 3) widespread corruption throughout government and security forces. This triumvirate of poor conditions did not necessarily directly lead to the rises of the Islamic State group but set conditions that were favorable to their advent.

If a powerful state actor such as the United States wishes to provide somewhat of a vaccine to the disease of violence from non-state actors, it must look to actions that will emphasize good governance, stable economic conditions, and political inclusivity. The unilateral use of hard power in most conflicts is ineffective, costly in both national treasure and human capital, and risks causing strategic overreach and miscalculation by the U.S. government. The United States is currently invested in a number of programs that could provide both relief and opportunity across the globe and particularly in areas with high potential of conflict. The United States Congress passed the Electrify Africa Act, which was aimed at helping over seventy percent of the Sub-Saharan African population that have no access to electricity. The bill emphasizes "transparency, accountability, and good governance."<sup>25</sup>

The United States is also investing in global soft/smart power initiatives with the Global Food Security Act. This bill authorizes a whole-of-government strategy to assist partner nations combat hunger through "inclusive, sustainable agricultural development,

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<sup>25</sup> USGLC. "USGLC Applauds Passage of Electrify Africa Act, Will Empower Millions Across Continent | U.S. Global Leadership Coalition." U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. February 1, 2016. Accessed October 04, 2016. <http://www.usglc.org/2016/02/01/usglc-applauds-passage-of-electrify-africa-act-will-empower-millions-across-continent/>.

with a particular focus on women and children."<sup>26</sup> The idea behind an application such as the Global Food Security Act is not to just throw foodstuffs and investment/aid blindly at hunger problems but to help build the capacities for nations to thrive and become self-sustaining. This, in turn, creates more jobs and leads to more likely societal cohesion, reducing the potentiality of conflict and the fomentation of an environment conducive to violent non-state actors.

Finally, the United States is focused on two aspects of investing in foreign aid: 1) Ensuring the most "bang for the buck" and 2) Tailoring investment to instill and reinforce good governance. Providing aid to countries blindly and without carefully planned direction can at best be wasted effort and capital; at worst it can lead to rampant corruption and redirection of aid to corrupt politicians, violent non-state actors, criminal organizations, and other undesirables. In 2014, European donors froze aid funds going into Tanzania after accusations arose of government officials siphoning upwards of \$124 million from an escrow account at the Bank of Tanzania.<sup>27</sup> This kind of abuse of aid not only disrupts the flow of assistance that desperately need it, but it undermines the population's faith in government and assists violent non-state actors in shaping a narrative portraying governments as the true enemy.

Aid has to be tailored to help foster stable economies, inculcate good governance, and help reinforce infrastructure that can provide essential services; not to help prop up nations economically. The providing of effective foreign aid is just one tool

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<sup>26</sup> Boyce, Amanda. "Lights! Food! Action! 3 Development Issues Before Congress in 2016." U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. January 26, 2016. Accessed October 04, 2016. <http://www.usglc.org/2016/01/26/lights-food-action-3-development-issues-before-congress-in-2016/>.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, Mark. "UK and International Donors Suspend Tanzania Aid after Corruption Claims." The Guardian. October 13, 2014. Accessed October 04, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/oct/13/uk-and-international-donors-suspend-tanzania-aid-after-corruption-claims>.

within the smart power toolbox. However, this tool can have a dramatic and wide-ranging effect in nations. The population's faith in government can increase, which can lead to greater security as the people "buy in" and turn more to the government than to violent non-state actors or other extra governmental forces. Additionally, the reputation of the United States can grow positively, leading to greater partner nation cooperation and repairing the image of a powerful nation that is seen as a unilateral aggressor after the disastrous action of invading Iraq.

But smart power isn't all about foreign aid and other soft power measures. It's about a measured and "smart" employment and coupling of both soft and hard power. Soft power can pay off in a multitude of ways but it doesn't work in every situation. Dr. Joseph Nye, the biggest proponent of soft power, pointed out that the Clinton administration tried to use soft power methods (diplomacy and offers of aid) to persuade the Taliban government in Afghanistan to stop sheltering Usama bin-Laden and al-Qaeda and it was ineffective. Sometimes, if a nail presents itself (i.e. al-Qaeda), a nation such as the United States needs a hammer. Violent non-state actors will not cease to exist nor wither under the pressure of sanctions, embargoes, or other diplomacy efforts. So the solution may lie somewhere in the middle. Smart power could mean shaping an environment that is not conducive to violent non-state actors while ruthlessly pursuing violent non-state actors that represent an existential threat and may undermine fostered security conditions.

This thesis explores and examines the possible applications and feasibility of smart power functions in foreign policy in order to deter and limit violent non-state actors. The objective of this study is to provide context and a more thorough

understanding of how smart power can be used to counter an enemy that cannot be coerced by conventional deterrent methods.



## Chapter 1: Rise of the Islamic State Group

### *Introduction*

The pre-eminent violent non-state actor on the world stage, at the present time, is the Islamic State group. No group receives more media attention or publicity than the group commonly known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (or ISIS). Numerous terrorism and counterinsurgency pundits have hastily named ISIS, a unique and one-of-a-kind threat. In actuality, ISIS or the Islamic State group is very much like a number of violent non-state actors before it, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the National Liberation Front (FLN).

In terms of categorization, the Islamic State group, lies somewhere between a separatist movement, an insurgent guerilla force, a terrorist group, and militants made up of irregular but recognizable armed forces. The Islamic State essentially fits into four of the five categories of violent non-state actors as defined by Dr. Klejda Mulaj.

The Islamic State group has catapulted itself into the global media's center stage and held the bewildered and frightened eye of the general public. Each act of brutality displayed by ISIS is followed up by an even more insidious display of cruelty, promptly broadcast over various media forms in order to achieve the psychological effect the group hopes for.<sup>28</sup> Despite the great lengths the group goes to display its viciousness and wanton disregard for human life, much like any other violent non-state actor, the Islamic State group, has strategic and tactical goals in mind, and works to carry out those goals.

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<sup>28</sup> Grady, John. "ISIS Brutality Rooted in an Apocalyptic Vision - USNI News." USNI News. September 22, 2015. Accessed March 24, 2016. <https://news.usni.org/2015/09/22/isis-brutality-rooted-in-an-apocalyptic-vision>.

In order to counter a violent non-state actor such as the Islamic State, it is important to understand what its origins are and how the group has risen to such levels of power and infamy. This chapter will elaborate on the beginnings and emergence of ISIS, as well as characteristics and TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures) consistently utilized by the group.

### *Origins of the Islamic State Group*

The Islamic State group traces its roots back to the Sunni insurgent group, led by the infamous Jordanian insurgent Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Zarqawi, born Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalaylah, was a jihadist from a Bedouin tribe in Jordan. Zarqawi became a hardened jihadist after a long stay in Jordanian prison. He was a proponent of fighting the “near enemy” or specifically the Jordanian government and the Americans in Iraq. His vision of establishing a more regional caliphate is largely carried out today by the Islamic State.

Under Zarqawi, AQI carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Iraq, targeting the U.S. military and Iraqi government officials as well as indiscriminately attacking and killing Shi'a civilians. AQI was notorious for its brutal attacks (coordinated suicide bombing was a preferred method) and it seemed to revel in shocking the West with video-recorded torture and beheadings. Al-Zarqawi publicly affiliated AQI, formerly known as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (which means Organization of Monotheism and Jihad, in Arabic), with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda but often diverted from the direction

and tactics al Qaeda adopted.<sup>29</sup> Zarqawi was, at times, more concerned with inciting sectarian violence than targeting the “crusader” American and British forces in Iraq. Apparently, Bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri disagreed with al-Zarqawi's deliberate targeting of Shi'a Muslims and his lack of focus on attacking American forces.<sup>30</sup> Bin Laden and Zawahiri were reportedly upset that Zarqawi refused to go along with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan's strategic goals and had alienated not only the Shi'a Muslim community in Iraq but other Sunnis with his November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan. Zarqawi and AQI were instrumental in igniting intense sectarian violence in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites after blowing up the Golden Mosque of Samarra.

AQI's power waned after the U.S. killed Zarqawi in an airstrike in Hibhib, Iraq on June 7, 2006.<sup>31</sup> AQI (made up of mostly foreign fighters) further alienated other Sunnis as it targeted local Sunni militants and separatist movements. By 2008, the Sons of Iraq (composed of former Sunni militants who fought against U.S. troops with AQI) turned against AQI and assisted U.S. forces in disrupting AQI operations and destroying their leadership. By April of 2010, AQI largely operated under the guise of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). ISI's top two commanders, Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi,

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<sup>29</sup> Weaver, Mary. "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." *The Atlantic*. July 1, 2006. Accessed November 20, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>.

<sup>30</sup> "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi (English Translation)." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. December 1, 2005. Accessed November 20, 2014. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>.

<sup>31</sup> Weaver, Mary. "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi." *The Atlantic*.

were killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid outside of Tikrit in April 2010.<sup>32</sup> After the killing of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi it appeared AQI was largely fractured and on the run.

### *Timeline of the Rise of the Caliphate*

The Islamic State did not so much rise from the ashes of Al-Qaeda in Iraq as it regrouped and further radicalized in Iraqi jails and U.S. detention centers all over the country. The death of Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi was a major turning point in the transformation of AQI.

By May of 2010, AQI/ISI announced its new leader as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an ISI militant relatively unknown to the U.S. intelligence community.<sup>33</sup> As opposed to the charismatic and high profile Zarqawi, al-Baghdadi has maintained a low profile and been far more clandestine in his movements and appearances (likely due to the fates Zarqawi and his other predecessors met at the hands of Coalition Forces). According to a BBC News profile of al-Baghdadi, he was likely born in Samarra, Iraq in approximately 1971, which would make him 44 years old.<sup>34</sup> Little is still known of al-Baghdadi's early life. However, he was jailed for four years in Camp Bucca, a U.S. detention facility in southern Iraq. Al-Baghdadi made a number of deep al-Qaeda contacts while he was held in Camp Bucca, which was considered one of the roughest detention facilities in Iraq holding some high profile jihadists. Terrorism and insurgency analysts believe that Camp Bucca became something of a pressure cooker where the birth of ISIS, in its present form, was born due to: 1) The further radicalization of jihadists who were

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<sup>32</sup> Roggio, Bill. "U.S. and Iraqi Forces Kill Al Masri and Baghdadi, Al Qaeda in Iraq's Top Two Leaders." The Long War Journal. April 19, 2010. Accessed November 20, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> "Profile: Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi." BBC News. July 5, 2014. Accessed November 23, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27801676>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

opposed to Coalition Forces and the Iraqi government<sup>35</sup>, 2) the social bonding between former Ba'athists with significant military training and experience within the Saddam Hussein government and jihadists<sup>36</sup>, and 3) the wide spread release of militants who had severe grievances against the United States.<sup>37</sup>

Al-Baghdadi craftily recruited former Ba'athist officers who had served in the Saddam regime. U.S. or Coalition forces had detained all of the men recruited and all the former detainees had vendettas against the Shi'a dominated government.<sup>38</sup>

In 2012, Al-Baghdadi launched the first of two major yearlong campaigns that would make the Islamic State the most prominent group of Islamic radicals in the world. The first campaign was known as "Breaking the Walls." During the campaign the ISI began collecting detailed intelligence on local security forces and staged a number of prison breaks in order to free former AQI foot soldiers and senior leadership with previous military experience. Jessica D. Lewis of the Institute for the Study of War wrote about the extensive campaign stating that, "this campaign consisted of a series of 24 major vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks and eight prison breaks that demonstrate the evolution of AQI's military capability over that time." The highly successful campaign culminated in the jihadist group's attack on Abu Ghraib Prison, a symbol of American detention of insurgents, which freed over 500 prisoners.

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<sup>35</sup> McCoy, Terrence. "How the Islamic State Evolved in an American Prison." Washington Post. November 4, 2014. Accessed March 15, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/04/how-an-american-prison-helped-ignite-the-islamic-state/>.

<sup>36</sup> Stewart, Scott. "How the Ba'ath Party Influences the Islamic State." Stratfor. August 13, 2015. Accessed March 18, 2016. <https://www.stratfor.com/weekly/how-baath-party-influences-islamic-state>.

<sup>37</sup> McIntyre, Sophie. "ISIS Claims Responsibility for Major Iraq Prison Break Leaving 62 Inmates and Police Killed." The Independent. May 10, 2015. Accessed March 24, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/over-60-slaughtered-in-isis-prison-break-10239113.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Zelin, Aaron Y. "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi: Islamic State's Driving Force." *BBC News*. 30 July 2014. Web. 26 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28560449>>.

Immediately following the conclusion of the “Breaking the Walls” campaign, AQI announced its second campaign in as many years. The second campaign named the “Soldier's Harvest”, consisted of multiple suicide attacks, car bombings, roadside IED attacks and brutal assassinations in order to incite sectarian violence and undermine the Al-Maliki government.<sup>39</sup> The main objective of this campaign was to demoralize and severely degrade the Iraqi Security Forces. Both of these campaigns swiftly brought AQI back into the spotlight of global media.

By 2013, Al-Baghdadi changed the name of AQI/ISI to the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Shams (ISIS) and announced that the group's campaign would extend to the Syrian Civil War.<sup>40</sup> The leader of ISIS claimed that the group would merge with the Al-Nusra Front; despite protestations from Al-Nusra Front leadership and Al Qaeda emir Al-Zawahiri himself, Al-Baghdadi took reportedly up to 80% of the Al-Nusra Front's fighters in Syria to wage ISIS' campaign there.<sup>41</sup>

From December 2013 until June of 2014, ISIS launched a vicious and remarkable campaign of rampant violence against Iraqi security forces and “collaborators” that capitalized on the already existent sectarian divide that was exacerbated by inept policies and rhetoric by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.<sup>42</sup> A perfect storm of a weak Iraqi army, poor military leadership and a feeling of receiving little support from the central government led to thousands upon thousands of Iraqi

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<sup>39</sup> Lewis, Jessica D. “AQI’S “SOLDIERS’ HARVEST” CAMPAIGN.” Institute for the Study of War. October 19, 2013. Accessed November 20, 2014. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/aqis-soldiers-harvest-campaign>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibrahim, Azeem. *The Resurgence of Al-Qaeda in Syria and Iraq*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Zelin, Aaron Y. “Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi: Islamic State's Driving Force.” BBC News. July 30, 2014. Accessed November 26, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28560449>.

<sup>42</sup> “Iraqi Violence Killed More than 2,400 People in June – UN.” *UN News Center*. UN, 1 July 2014. Web. 20 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48177#.VHH9YRaCXwy>>.

troops fleeing Mosul and leaving it to less than 1000 ISIS militants.<sup>43</sup> ISIS took over the Mosul International Airport and pillaged all of Mosul to obtain millions of dollars as well as copious amounts of U.S. military equipment and logistical supplies.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, in continuing its previous "Breaking the Walls" campaign, launched prison and jailbreaks to free thousands of inmates and detainees that would join their cause. After freeing the prisoners, ISIS separated out the Sunnis and summarily executed the rest.<sup>45</sup> The taking of Mosul and the unbridled violence witnessed during that assault in northern Iraq cemented ISIS' place as one of the most notorious and feared Islamicized radical group in the world.

The popular misnomer is that by 2014 Al Qaeda in Afghanistan broke with ISIS because of the group's extreme brutality. This is a sensational story but the truth is that Al Qaeda broke with the group because of a power struggle and was frustrated that Al-Baghdadi, like Al-Zarqawi, refused to follow orders from Al-Qaeda prime. At the end of June, ISIS removed Iraq and Syria from its name and referred to itself as the Islamic State.<sup>46</sup> This was a significant change as the Islamic State group proclaimed itself the ruling Islamic caliphate over conquered (and future targeted) territories and named Al-Baghdadi as its caliph. This label change represents al-Baghdadi and the Islamic

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<sup>43</sup> Sly, Liz, and Ahmed Ramadan. "Insurgents Seize Iraqi City of Mosul as Security Forces Flee." *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 10 June 2014. Web. 23 Nov. 2014. <[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgents-seize-iraqi-city-of-mosul-as-troops-flee/2014/06/10/21061e87-8fcd-4ed3-bc94-0e309af0a674\\_story.html?hpid=z1](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/insurgents-seize-iraqi-city-of-mosul-as-troops-flee/2014/06/10/21061e87-8fcd-4ed3-bc94-0e309af0a674_story.html?hpid=z1)>.

<sup>44</sup> McCoy, Terrence. "ISIS Just Stole \$425 Million, Iraqi Governor Says, and Became the 'World's Richest Terrorist Group'." *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 12 June 2014. Web. 23 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/12/isis-just-stole-425-million-and-became-the-worlds-richest-terrorist-group/>>.

<sup>45</sup> Nebehay, Stephanie, and Ahmed Rasheed. "U.N. Accuses Islamic State of Mass Killings." *Reuters*. 25 Aug. 2014. Web. 19 Nov. 2014. <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/08/25/uk-iraq-security-idUKKBN0GP0L220140825>>.

<sup>46</sup> Wofford, Taylor. "ISIL, ISIS or IS? The Etymology of the Islamic State." *Newsweek*. September 16, 2014. Accessed March 20, 2016. <http://www.newsweek.com/etymology-islamic-state-270752>.

State's desire to be viewed as a political group and governing body much as Hamas has become in Palestine. Purportedly, the Islamic State group has set up, thanks to the membership of many former Ba'athists, many social services including helping the poor and elderly.<sup>47</sup> Using a "take and hold" approach similar to the one adopted by the U.S. military in "the Surge" under the guidance of General David Petraeus, the Islamic State has been able to employ its own version of counterinsurgency to "win hearts and minds".<sup>48</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The Islamic State group has exceeded the infamy of AQI and achieved seemingly mythical status not only in Iraq and Syria, but also among mainstream media and political leadership across the Western world. The group has been subject to a bevy of U.S. and Coalition airstrikes (over 12,000 estimated strikes) that were presumably thinning their ranks but the group is still estimated to have a number of fighters exceeding 30,000. The group has been estimated to have suffered up to 10,000 casualties but their current assessed numbers suggest that new recruits are still flowing in. Significant territorial gains have been made by Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga in Iraq and Syria, especially in Kurdish areas.<sup>49</sup> However, the Islamic State group is expanding in other areas, due to their relationships and affiliates in Nigeria<sup>50</sup>,

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<sup>47</sup> Stewart, Megan A. "What's So New about the Islamic State's Governance?" *Washington Post*.

<sup>48</sup> Lewis, Jessica D. "The Islamic State: A Counter-Strategy for a Counter-State." *Middle East Security Report* 21 (2014): 10-33. Print.

<sup>49</sup> Mackay, Mairi. "ISIS Loses Over Quarter of Territory in Iraq, Says U.S." CNN. April 16, 2015. Accessed August 9, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/15/middleeast/isis-loses-territory-iraq/>.

<sup>50</sup> "Nigeria's Boko Haram Pledges Allegiance to Islamic State." BBC News. March 7, 2015. Accessed August 11, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31784538>.



Northern Afghanistan/Uzbekistan<sup>51</sup>, Tunisia<sup>52</sup>, and Libya<sup>53</sup>. The seemingly great progress against the jihadist group may be mitigated by the growth of the Islamic State group in new areas.

Turkey jumped into an already convoluted situation wherein the United States had already been arming and supporting the Kurdish Peshmerga, which has many members that directly oppose Turkey and wish for an independent or autonomous Kurdish state.<sup>54</sup> It is hard to imagine a scenario in which hard power, alone, can deter, limit, and otherwise degrade the Islamic State group (and similar violent non-state actors) around the globe. The growing likelihood of an increased number of violent non-state actors (not just jihadist terrorist organizations but also separatist movements and violent political movements) indicates that the United States, and other large or powerful state actors, must explore the possibility of “smart power” approaches to countering and deterring such threats.

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<sup>51</sup> Lemon, Edward. "IMU Pledges Allegiance to Islamic State." EurasiaNet.org. August 1, 2015. Accessed August 11, 2015. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/74471>.

<sup>52</sup> Elbagir, Nima. "Tunisian Town Where ISIS Makes Militants." CNN. July 3, 2015. Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/03/africa/tunisia-terror-attacks-kasserine/>.

<sup>53</sup> "Islamic State Militants in Libya 'seize Sirte Airport'" BBC News. May 29, 2015. Accessed August 13, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32935412>.

<sup>54</sup> Arun, Neil. "Turkey v Islamic State v the Kurds: What's Going On?" BBC News. August 12, 2015. Accessed August 12, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33690060>.

## Chapter 2: A Review of Power

### *Introduction*

19th Century German poet and historian Friedrich Schiller once wrote that, "Power is the most persuasive rhetoric."<sup>55</sup> Since the earliest days of man, when humans attempted to exert control over one another and impose their will, power has held high importance in humanities dealings amongst itself. Whether it be individuals or nations comprised of individuals, the building of, wielding of, and employment of power has been a critical part of life. Regardless of the amount of power (of any type) a state actor can accumulate, misguided application of that power can have ineffective or even disastrous effects. It is important to understand power and the implications of its various uses.

In this chapter, I intend to explicate on the definition of power, its context within global security, and the two main types of power: hard power and soft power. The goal of this chapter is to better describe what power is and what the two primary forms of power can and cannot do.

Much like the previously mentioned ideas of "asymmetric threat" and "violent non-state actor", Harvard professor and inventor of the terms soft, hard, and smart power, Dr. Joseph Nye defines the word power as, "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants."<sup>56</sup> This could be considered a rather simplistic definition. It could even be perceived as oversimplifying to constrain power to just this

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55 Demakis, Joseph. *The Ultimate Book of Quotations*. Raleigh, NC: Lulu Enterprises, 2012: 330

56 Nye, Joseph. "The Benefits of Soft Power." Harvard Business School. August 02, 2004. Accessed June 02, 2016. <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4290.html>

definition considering the vast expanse of research dedicated to studying power and its applications. However, it is necessary to frame what power is, and because Dr. Nye is widely considered the author of the terms "soft power" and "smart power", his definition is most accurate and fitting for this thesis. In the end, Dr. Nye's definition, even if it is fairly basic, gets at the heart of power. State and violent non-state actors will use different means of power in different ways to force other actors into positions that will help the power wielder achieve their objectives and achieve desired effects.

No state or violent non-state actor holds power that is unstoppable and without limitations. Even the most powerful nation in the world, the United States, with its entire military might, economic clout, and formidable allies cannot unequivocally impose its wills on either state or non-state actors. There are parameters and confines in which power, in any form, can be applied. Early in *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Dr. Nye emphasizes the importance of those who hold and use power understanding the context and implications (intentional or otherwise) when applying it. Dr. Nye wrote, "Power resources are not as fungible as money. What wins in one game may not help at all in another. Holding a winning poker hand does not help if the game is bridge."<sup>57</sup> This is an important consideration to remember as we explore the applicability of smart power against violent non-state actors. The old adage, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" does not apply to the application of any form of power. State actors, like the individuals that make up their population, are all unique which means, unfortunately, there is no magical solution or application of power that can deter the rise of violent non-state actors within states. However, it is possible to

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57 Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

frame and contextualize how facets of power can be applied, and tailor those applications to individual areas of crises or emerging threats.

### *Hard Power*

Hard power is often thought of as military action; whether it is air strikes, deterrence, reconnaissance, or full-scale invasion or armed intervention. But the idea of hard power expands outside of just military paradigms. Going back to Dr. Nye again, we will use his definition of hard power for the purposes of this thesis: "The ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will".<sup>58</sup> Hard power is more about coercion than persuasion or attraction. However, coercion can be achieved in ways other than just military armed action. Coercion can be brought about by simple relocation, or forward deployment, of forces, without necessitating bombs being dropped or shots being fired. The simple presence of lethal military forces, concentrated or dispersed, can prove an effective deterrent that can coerce other state actors into following another state's will and desires.

Hard power is about forcing another actor to do something they did not have the intent or desire to do in the first place. Dr. Nye notes the importance of understanding what an actor wants to do before the coercing actor makes the hard power attempt.<sup>59</sup> The state that is potentially being influenced may already intend to conduct the action that they are being coerced into. For example, Nation A may wish to force Nation B to give up a suspected chemical weapons program. Nation B may already desire an exit

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<sup>58</sup> Nye, Joseph S. "Propaganda Isn't the Way: Soft Power." Harvard - Belfer Center. January 10, 2003. Accessed April 2, 2016. [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/1240/propaganda\\_isnt\\_the\\_way.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/1240/propaganda_isnt_the_way.html).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

from that chemical weapons program. However, a hard power action by Nation A may force a negative outcome in regards to Nation B. Nation B may choose to hold on to their chemical weapons program to avoid looking weak on the global stage. Or they may even respond with their own hard power reaction leading to more conflict. Intentions are important to understand. Understanding intentions correctly and not misreading situations is easier said than done. The Islamic State group is an apocalyptic group that wishes to force a great war between the Caliphate and Rome (the West) in order to bring about the end of the world.<sup>60</sup> The use of hard power against the Islamic State group, while certainly necessary in many cases, can bring about the desired outcome of the actor being coerced.

Hard power is grounded in the international relations theme of realism. Hard power makes sense and can be effective if the world is viewed through a paradigm that displays an anarchic international system. The world can only be brought to order by the application of power. Often in a realism lens, hard power is king. However, realism fails to properly account for violent non-state actors. There's a realist assumption that state actors are the principal international players. However, non-state actors (violent or not) are prominent players on the international scene. Violent non-state actors, especially, are difficult to coerce. They often cannot be threatened with destruction by nuclear attack like a state actor could do against another state actor. VNSAs are not typically representative of the state as a whole and tend to blend in and operate among the

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<sup>60</sup> Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." The Atlantic. March 2015. Accessed April 3, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

population. Hard power, in the effort to deter, limit, and even counter violent non-state actors is not nearly as effective as when attempting to coerce a state.

Hard power is divided into two philosophical categories: the carrot or the stick. The carrot meaning some incentive aimed at coercing another actor. The stick being a punishment or harsh action intended to bring another actor to heel. Some examples of hard power include but are not limited to: (Sticks) missile strikes, drone strikes, airstrikes, armed intervention (either in support of or overthrowing a state government/military), economic sanctions and embargoes, United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs), (Carrots) economic or diplomatic concessions. While economic and diplomatic concessions are not offensive by nature they are coercive and are inherently conditional. "Sticks" are intrinsically aggressive and largely unsubtle.<sup>61</sup>

Hard power is alluring because of its observable and sometimes extremely effective results. Hard power can provide immediate, tangible results. The 1st Chancellor of Germany, Otto von Bismarck once said in a speech, "This policy cannot succeed through speeches ...and songs; it can be carried out only through blood and iron".<sup>62</sup> This is why hard power is so highly viewed by dictators and totalitarians. It is definitive and direct. A Navy destroyer launching a Tomahawk land attack cruise missile can decimate an entire terrorist training camp, eliminating a critical node of a violent non-state actor. Hard power is often quantifiable in cost, depth, and effectiveness. However, using measurements such as body counts is not necessarily indicative of

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<sup>61</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

<sup>62</sup> Robertson, Connie. *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Quotations*. Ware: Wordsworth, 1996. 45.

success or positive effect against the problem as evidenced by the United States' experience in Vietnam.

Hard power has the ability to create lasting effects based on the damage it inflicts or the vital impact it has in certain situations. For instance, the use of hard power by the U.S. military in World War II changed the military ambitions and international position of both Germany and Japan for over six decades. However, those same longer lasting impacts can have an inversely negative effect. For example, the United States' use of hard power to overthrow Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist regime in power in Iraq effectively ended a dictatorship. However, that hard power application (the largest in three decades) fomented a regional security crisis in the Middle East that the region has failed to recover from.

Author Max Brooks wrote a quote about lies that is equally applicable to hard power: "Lies are neither bad nor good. Like a fire they can keep you warm or burn you to death, depending on how they're used."<sup>63</sup> Hard power can be extremely useful and absolutely necessary. At certain points one cannot attract or more passively compel other state and violent non-state actors to do as they wish or even come to the bargaining table. Hard power becomes necessary to force a change and impose one's will. However, use of hard power in those situations is not without its second order effects.

Russia has shown how effective hard power can be against violent non-state actors during their campaign in 2015 and 2016 supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime

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<sup>63</sup> Brooks, Max. *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*. New York: Crown, 2006.

in Syria. Russian forces hammered Syrian rebel groups opposing the central government and gave regime forces much needed "white space" to secure large swaths of territory that was rebel held; some of it had been held for years.<sup>64</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin has shown that hard power still has its place and has consolidated gains to stabilize the Assad regime enough to pull out the bulk of Russian forces in Syria throughout the spring of 2016. This is a great example of an effective use of hard power.

However, hard power remains limited in its capacity to coerce other actors, particularly violent non-state actors. The United States, under both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, has exercised hard power across the globe for almost fifteen years trying to deter, limit, degrade, and otherwise defeat al-Qaeda and its various offshoots and affiliates.<sup>65</sup> The U.S. used hard power in the invasion of both Iraq and Afghanistan, and then continued to use its military might to subdue the insurgencies that flared up in both countries. This has been a failure in hard power for a number of reasons. Between the invasion of Iraq and the thousands of drone strikes conducted in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, thousands of innocents have been killed as collateral damage in hard power strikes the world over. This effect may or may not have incited more extremism; radicalizing populations that may have at least been neutral. The evidence of radicalization is not definitive and correlation is not

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<sup>64</sup> Faith, Ryan. "Russian Heavy Bombers Are Hammering Syria - and It's Practice for Bigger Fights | VICE News." VICE News. November 19, 2005. Accessed April 24, 2016. <https://news.vice.com/article/russian-heavy-bombers-are-hammering-syria-and-its-practice-for-bigger-fights>.

<sup>65</sup> Calabresi, Massimo. "Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria: The War on Terror Is Over. Long Live the War on Terror." Time. June 16, 2014. Accessed May 22, 2016. <http://time.com/2873297/boko-haram-iraq-bergdahl-war-terror/>.



causation, however, the drone strikes have done little to promote the image of the United States or attract others to its side.<sup>66</sup>

In the case of the Islamic State, as counterintuitive as it may seem, hard power may be welcomed and incited by the violent non-state actor for a few reasons. The Islamic State is an apocalyptic group that wants to force the "Roman army" of the west into a decisive showdown.<sup>67</sup> In a more practical sense, aerial bombardment from the United States, due to the mixing of Islamic State fighters in the civilian population, increases the likelihood of civilian casualties. The Islamic State group will capitalize on this, painting the United States as an infidel aggressor who kills noble Muslims and use it to recruit new members.

Hard power may not be the answer to every conflict or geostrategic problem but it is an important tool in the state's power kit box. There are times when a goal or objective just cannot be achieved without at least some semblance of coercion or force found in hard power. Sometimes, however, as the old saying goes, "You get more flies with honey than vinegar". Attraction can be a powerful tool itself, which leads us to the concept of soft power.

### *Soft Power*

Soft power, an idea popularized by Dr. Nye, is at the opposite end of the power spectrum from hard power. Soft power focuses on attraction rather than coercion.

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<sup>66</sup> Abbas, Hassan. "Are Drone Strikes Killing Terrorists or Creating Them?" The Atlantic. March 31, 2013. Accessed April 19, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/03/are-drone-strikes-killing-terrorists-or-creating-them/274499/>.

<sup>67</sup> Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants." The Atlantic. March 2015. Accessed April 3, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

Through soft power, a state actor hopes to set conditions either regionally or globally to compel, rather than coerce, other actors to meet that state's desired goals and outcomes. Soft power is about getting another actor to help meet your goals because they want to, not because they are forced to. The underlying strength and character of soft power is in the idea of the power of persuasion.<sup>68</sup>

Soft power applications vary from diplomatic measures to fostering culture regionally and globally. The effectiveness of soft power is measured by influence; however, influence is a difficult thing to measure and quantify. Nonetheless, several individuals and organizations have attempted to. The Institute of Government in coordination with *Monocle Magazine* compiled 50 different metrics on all the countries of the world to create the Soft Power Index. The study countries "according to the quality of government; diplomatic infrastructure; cultural output; capacity for education; and their appeal to business." The five component parts of soft power according to the IfG/Monocle study are: business/innovation, culture, government, diplomacy, and education. While the collaborative group's methodology is detailed, they themselves mention that many of the interpretations and the capital of smart power itself are subjective.<sup>69</sup> Another attempt to rank and provide context to soft power was put forth by policy advisor and researcher, Simon Anholt. Mr. Anholt is the founder and proponent of the Good Country Index. The Good Country Index measures a nation's contributions to culture, science & technology, world order, planet & climate, prosperity & equality, and health & wellbeing through a multitude of metrics. Mr. Anholt created the Good Country

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<sup>68</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. 5.

<sup>69</sup> "Soft Power Survey 2015/16 - Film." *Monocle*. November 2015. Accessed March 31, 2016. <https://monocle.com/film/affairs/soft-power-survey-2015-16/>.

Index due to his belief that almost every other index measured countries performances in isolation: "whether it's economic growth, stability, justice, transparency, good governance, productivity, democracy, freedom, or even happiness, it's mostly measured as internal performance."<sup>70</sup> The Good Country Index is described as ranking countries not by the effects of what they do but rather what they "give" or attempt to put out positively.

Political consultancy and public relations agency Portland created its own soft power rankings that it dubbed the "Soft Power 30". Portland uses metrics that measure six different categories: engagement, culture, government, education, digital, and enterprise. Some of the metrics include: total number of international tourists, R&D spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Transparency International Corruption Index score, and literacy rates. Dr. Joseph Nye called the Soft Power 30 "the clearest picture to date of global soft power".<sup>71</sup> This is high praise coming from the author of soft power as an idea and term.

The United States performed extremely well in the Soft Power 30 rankings and the IfG/Monocle Soft Power Index, ranking third and second, respectively. However, the United States ranked dramatically lower in the Good Country Index, coming in at number 20. One could look at the United States' ranking in the first two rankings and see the U.S. as having an enormous amount of capital in soft power. However, with all this seemingly large capability in soft power, the United States still can be seen as

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<sup>70</sup> Anholt, Simon. "The Good Country - About the Good Country Index." The Good Country. January 2015. Accessed April 25, 2016. <https://goodcountry.org/index/about-the-index>.

<sup>71</sup> "The World's Most Comprehensive Ranking of Global Soft Power." Portland Soft Power 30 Digital Diplomacy Index. June 14, 2016. Accessed June 30, 2016. <http://softpower30.portland-communications.com/>.

being at a disadvantage when facing violent non-state actors and even performing poorly in deterring and limiting VNSAs. Conversely, the U.S. could be seen as relatively weak in soft power compared to other developed nations when viewing through the lens of the Good Country Index. If it is true that the United States has great soft power capability and capacity then one may conclude that soft power is ineffective or at least severely limited in deterring and limiting VNSAs. However, if the United States is weak in soft power then it bears examining if investing more heavily in soft power could yield better results than what the United States is currently seeing in the struggle against violent non-state actors.

Soft power has won in different ways before. Proponents of soft power, such as Dr. Nye, have argued in favor of smart power by pointing to ways in which soft power "won". One example of a perceived soft power success is the Chinese student protests in Tiananmen Square that used a mocked up replica of the Statue of Liberty as their symbol of resistance against the Communist Party in power.<sup>72</sup> However, the protests ultimately failed, dissent did not spread as much as hoped, and the Communist Party of China remains in power. Another example that is frequently used is the spread of Radio Free Europe behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>73</sup> While this was a highly successful example of soft power, it was hardly the primary driver of the downfall of the Soviet Union. The downfall of one of the world's greatest superpowers was precipitated by downward trending economic conditions, the pervasiveness of Western culture and

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<sup>72</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Prologue

<sup>73</sup> "The Story of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty." Hoover Institution. 2001. Accessed June 25, 2016. [http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/library/docs/story\\_of\\_radio\\_free\\_europe.pdf](http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/library/docs/story_of_radio_free_europe.pdf).

openness (including Radio Free Europe), glasnost, perestroika, and an arms race inspired by the United States that was veritably impossible to continue indefinitely.

Soft power certainly had its role in both the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rise of the United States as the world's lone superpower. However, like hard power, soft power cannot and will not be the "be-all, end-all". Soft power is merely a tool in the toolbox. It must be utilized properly and it also must be complemented, typically by hard power. Dr. Nye himself admits that while soft power is a powerful tool, often underutilized, it cannot be applied to every geopolitical situation and cannot mitigate every security crises and concern. While there is no paradigm of power that can truly apply to any given situation, both soft power and hard power are too limited to apply individually to even a broad spectrum of security problems or crises. However, by capitalizing on the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of each approach, one could develop a paradigm or an application of power that could be highly successful in a multitude of facets. This idea brings us to the crux of this thesis, which is "smart power".

### *Smart Power*

The idea of smart power came to fruition due to a number of political science pundits and Dr. Nye himself believing that neither hard power nor soft power in and of themselves could be enough to address major security issues. The Center for Strategic and International Studies' Commission on Smart Power defines smart power as the skillful combination of both hard and soft power. The Commission stated that, "Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to achieve

American objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power."<sup>74</sup> The central idea behind smart power is accentuating the strengths of hard and soft power while concurrently curtailing their weaknesses.

Smart power may be a newer term but the historical use of it is not unprecedented or indeed even revolutionary. Smart power, for example, could be a state investing in infrastructure and aid for a failing or faltering state whilst also using hard power to conduct airstrikes or other military actions to degrade, disrupt, or otherwise destroy a violent non-state actor within that state. In essence, the state conducting the hard power application is, treating both the symptoms (the violent non-state actor) and the disease (conditions fostering an environment conducive to violent non-state actors).

The effectual use of smart power is easier said than done. Effective smart power requires all the same resources as soft and hard power, in spades. In order to effectively apply smart power, a state must have: 1) enough national treasure to implement soft power initiatives such as aid and development programs, 2) military might to deter opponents or if necessary conduct hard power actions such as airstrikes or other conventional military engagements, 3) global legitimacy to lend credibility to the state's hard power and soft power activities on the world stage. Soft power is available to a wide range of state actors due to the fact that it is less tangible than hard power and does not require a large military power to apply it. Smart power, however, does require a number of resources not available to every country. But in the long run,

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<sup>74</sup> "CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America." Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2007. Accessed October 15, 2015.

smart power can pay off big due to possible long term effects that will shape environments to be less susceptible to security crises and violent non-state actors.

Smart power, in reality, is seemingly geared towards interaction between state actors. Soft power measures set global, regional, and even local conditions that establish legitimacy and prestige for the state applying them. Hard power applications are then levied to ensure security, shore up allies, and bring adversaries to heel. Though that sequence doesn't necessarily have to be in that order. As will be noted in the next chapter, smart power has some proven effectiveness against state actors in a more conventional setting. However, through this thesis I hope to explore and better define how smart power can be applied against violent non-state actors who represent an asymmetric threat.

In the next chapter of this thesis I will examine some historical examples of smart power applications. In evaluating these historical examples I hope to glean out lessons from successful applications as well as ineffective applications and their shortcomings.

## Chapter 3: Examples of Smart Power Applications

### *Introduction*

As discussed in the previous chapter, soft power and hard power are both limited in their applications. While both forms of power have strongpoints, neither is without its weaknesses. The aspiration of smart power is to reinforce the strengths of both soft and hard power as well as minimize the weaknesses of each. Smart power has the potential to become incredibly impactful. Hard power and smart power complement one another. However, before the potential applications of smart power can be further explored in this thesis, it is important to take a further look at some recent historical applications of smart power. Through the examination of historical applications, we can address some significant questions: A) Where has smart power been applied effectively?, B) Where has smart power encountered limitations?, C) How long does it take for smart power applications to take effect?, D) What are the most significant limitations of smart power?, and E) What are some of the crucial boundaries or parameters in which smart power should be applied in order to prove effective? It is impossible to address all these questions with complete certainty, but by further mining these historical examples I hope to provide more context and framing to how smart power can be used to limit, deter, or otherwise counter violent non-state actors.

In order to delve into these questions and establish some historical precedence regarding smart power I will review three previous examples (events) in which it could be perceived that smart power was used. The three historical examples that will be reviewed will be: 1) The Cold War (~1947-1991), 2) The First Iraq War/Desert Storm (1991), and (3) the Libyan Crisis/Civil War. By looking at these examples I hope to



identify some historical patterns, trends, and characteristics from three different conflicts of varying durations and origins. The Cold War was a long, enduring conflict characterized by different soft and hard power plays. The First Iraq War, or Operation Desert Storm, despite the years of lead-up, was a relatively quick conflict. The Libyan Crisis and Civil War still endures today and is replete with lessons about modern conflict, violent non-state actors, and the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of smart power.

After reviewing the three historical examples, I will identify the appropriate applications of smart power, ineffective applications and shortcomings, and I will conclude with a summary of my findings.

### *The Cold War (~1947-1991)*

Academics sometimes disagree on when exactly the Cold War began and whether it lasted the entirety of forty-four years or was intermittent. However, most scholars would agree the Cold War ended in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Thankfully for the world, the Cold War ended with the breakup of the formerly mighty Soviet Union and not in a nuclear exchange that resulted in an atomic Armageddon. How was the United States able to emerge victorious against the USSR? It could be argued that the Soviet Union collapsed under the weight of its own failed economic pursuits. Or that the stifling of dissension and differing thought eventually led to a veritable break in the dam that opened the floodgates, or that Gorbachev ripped apart the Soviet Union himself with too much reform in glasnost and perestroika. While there are numerous potential causes for the breakup of the Soviet Union and the fall of

a global superpower, the United States had a key role in the downfall of its greatest nemesis in the 20th Century.

Joseph Nye and other proponents of smart power have argued that smart power was a major reason the United States was able to prevail over the USSR.<sup>75</sup> The reasoning behind this assertion is that the United States' balance of soft and hard power levied against the Soviet Union was enough to defeat them. The United States' soft power in this case was largely its culture and ideals of an open society as opposed to the censorship and inwardness of the Soviet Union. Radio Free Europe is the most common example cited. In this case, champions of soft power have portrayed the U.S. in that time period as the shining light that defeated communism and other countries aspired to be like.

Also it is possible that the investment the United States had in Europe through the Marshall Plan was essential to creating a stronger Europe that could resist Soviet pressure, persuasion, and coercion. The prosperity and recovery that Europe experienced set the environment for a strong Western Europe to help be the bulwark for the United States against the Soviet Union. But soft power alone could not defeat the world's other superpower. Hard power was a key component in the United States' victory.

The U.S. and Soviet arms race is often highlighted as a major component in America's victory over the USSR. The U.S. used its massive defense expenditures to

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<sup>75</sup> Nye, Joseph S. *The Future of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011.

build a military imposing enough to force the Soviet Union to spend more than it could afford on military technology and cripple an already weakening economic and political system. The might of the U.S. military and its nuclear triad (nuclear armed aircraft, ballistic missile submarines, and intercontinental ballistic missiles) deterred the Soviet Union from taking overly aggressive action against the United States.

The United States victory in the Cold War is often pointed to as the most often as a prime example of how effective smart power can be for two primary reasons: 1) It was a definitive and "clean" win. The Soviet Union was soundly defeated and fell apart before the world's eyes. There were no lingering insurgencies or civil war for the United States to deal with. Despite a Russian resurgence over the last decade and a half, the former Soviet Union still isn't on the same level of the United States. 2) The fight against the USSR presented the perfect framework for smart power to be applied against a state actor. The Soviet Union was a known enemy, fighting under a recognized flag, in uniform, and largely in plain sight. Conventional/nuclear deterrence measures held water against a government that was at least somewhat beholden to its citizenry. Diplomatic overtures at least had an opportunity to succeed. Finally, soft power and methods of persuasion were effective possibly because of the smaller cultural gap between the West and the population of the Soviet Union; unlike the incredibly massive cultural gap between the West and Islamic nations and populations.

That is not to say the smart power applications used against the Soviet Union, which were quite successful, cannot be levied against violent non-state actors. However, in order for those measures to be successful they must be viewed through a different lens other than the traditional state on state paradigm.

### *The First Gulf War / Operation Desert Storm (1990-1991)*

If the U.S. defeat of the Soviet Union was the best example in modern history of the use of smart power, the First Gulf War must be a close second. Like the defeat of the USSR, this was a "clean" victory against a defined enemy, despite the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Coming on the heels of the defeat of the Soviet Union, the United States was enjoying its position as the world's lone superpower and enjoyed enormous global popularity. Saddam Hussein was a perfect enemy: a brutal dictator who showed regional aggression, isolated Iraq from potentially powerful allies, and practically dared the world to respond to his invasion of Kuwait.

While Operation Desert Storm did not feature as many soft power applications as the Cold War, it did focus more on coalition building and featured a healthy amount of diplomacy along with global hard power nonmilitary measures such as economic sanctions and United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the United States had attempted to dissuade Iraq from aggression towards Kuwait with diplomatic overtures through allies such as Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Kuwait and Iraq were close to a diplomatic solution but the Kuwaitis came up one billion dollars short of the ten billion dollars Saddam Hussein demanded. However, following the breakdown of diplomacy, Iraq invaded Kuwait and quickly steamrolled a small, weak, and ineffective Kuwaiti military.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Finlan, Alastair. *The Gulf War 1991*. Oxford: Osprey Pub., 2003. 29

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 26

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 660 within hours of the invasion, demanding that Iraq withdraw to its own borders.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, the Arab League passed a resolution against Iraq. Four days after the invasion, the UNSC passed Resolution 661<sup>79</sup>, which employed economic sanctions on Iraq. Shortly thereafter, Resolution 665, authorizing a naval blockade, to enforce said sanctions, was authorized.<sup>80</sup> These measures were of the hard power variety but not in the sense of lethal military force that is traditionally thought of. These actions added legitimacy to the United States' intervention in Kuwait and were in stark contrast to the questionable and widely criticized use of UN Security Council Resolution 1441 in the 2003 Iraq War.<sup>81</sup>

The U.S. had to back up these soft and non-lethal hard power measures with true military might. The United States deployed six aircraft carrier battle groups, several battleships, hundreds of aircraft (combat and support), and 540,000 U.S. personnel.<sup>82</sup> The Persian Gulf War was anything but a fair fight. The United States won the battle of ideology and legitimacy in the soft power arena, while concurrently winning the tangible battle on the ground with hard power supremacy. The war was mostly fought with air power soundly defeating the Iraqi Air Force before it ever took off and newly employed

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<sup>78</sup> "United Nations Security Council Resolution 660." United Nations Archives. Accessed July 7, 2016. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/10/IMG/NR057510.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>79</sup> "The Situation Between Iraq and Kuwait." United Nations Archives. August 18, 1990. Accessed April 22, 2016. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/11/IMG/NR057511.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>80</sup> "Resolution 665." United Nations Archives. August 18, 1990. Accessed April 23, 2016. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/15/IMG/NR057515.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>81</sup> "Resolution 1441 (2002)." United Nations Archives. November 8, 2002. Accessed April 25, 2016. <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf>.

<sup>82</sup> "War in the Persian Gulf Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm August 1990–March 1991." U.S. Army: History. May 28, 2010. Accessed April 29, 2016. [http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/070/70-117-1/cmh\\_70-117-1.pdf](http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/070/70-117-1/cmh_70-117-1.pdf).

"smart bombs" (precision guided munitions) hammering Iraqi ground forces and tanks.<sup>83</sup>

The Persian Gulf War was won by a large coalition that included 38 countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France, Canada, former Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Poland, Spain, Denmark, Portugal, Hungary, Sweden, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Italy, Argentina, Honduras, Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Senegal, Niger, Bangladesh, Philippines, and South Korea.<sup>84</sup> Countries from North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia comprised the coalition making it a truly intercontinental effort. This is an important aspect of smart power. Not every action must be a joint effort but the inclusion of allies and a breadth of nations in the decision making process and in high visibility efforts can lend significant legitimacy and even increase popular support at home and abroad. Secretary of State James Baker, who embarked on an 11-day trip to nine countries, soliciting for support including forces and funds, largely pieced this coalition together. Approximately \$52 billion of the \$61.1 billion dollar cost of the Persian Gulf War was paid for by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab nations as well as Germany and Japan.<sup>85</sup> In comparison, the second Iraq War, or Operation Iraqi Freedom, may have cost upwards of \$2 trillion

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<sup>83</sup> Greenemeier, Larry. "GPS and the World's First "Space War"" Scientific American. February 8, 2016. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gps-and-the-world-s-first-space-war/>.

<sup>84</sup> "Gulf War Facts." CNN.com In-Depth Specials. 2001. Accessed April 28, 2016. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080317110507/http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/gulf.war/facts/gulfwar/>.

<sup>85</sup> Migdal, Joel S. *Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014. p. 308

dollars;<sup>86</sup> a staggering figure that was covered almost exclusively by the United States. Additionally, the coalition called the "Coalition of the Willing" by former U.S. President George W. Bush was more show than substance compared to the true powerful coalition of the Persian Gulf War. Incredibly, some nations were not even aware they were part of the 2003 Coalition and others had no troops or aid to speak of but were "moral support".

The Persian Gulf War was a great success story not only in U.S. history but also in the application of smart power, even if it was not a commonly known term at the time the war happened. Given the fiasco of Iraq from 2003 to even today, it is unlikely the U.S. has the global good standing or "perfect storm" of a scenario to pull off this kind of victory. All the relative gains made by the victory in Kuwait have been majorly overshadowed by the mismanagement and misconduct of the 2003 invasion and subsequent nation rebuilding effort in Iraq. Regardless of future events, there are numerous lessons to be learned from the use of smart power in the Persian Gulf War, which will be covered later in the chapter.

### *Libya (2011-?)*

Plainly put, Libya was a disaster. Libya has been embroiled in chaos and violence since the Libyan Revolution began as part of the Arab Spring in 2011. In February 2011, protests in Zawiya and Benghazi devolved into violent clashes between anti-government protesters and governmental forces loyal to Libya's longtime leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi. Libyan security forces shooting civilians resulted in a full-

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<sup>86</sup> Trotta, Daniel. "Iraq War Costs U.S. More than \$2 Trillion: Study." Reuters. March 14, 2013. Accessed April 29, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-war-anniversary-idUSBRE92D0PG20130314>.

scale rebellion that engulfed the entire nation. The Gaddafi regime was accused of a multitude of human rights violations and purposeful attacks against civilians.<sup>87</sup> The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1973, which called for an immediate ceasefire and the stop of any attacks against civilians by any means necessary. However, Russia and China both abstained from the vote.<sup>88</sup>

The U.S. and its NATO allies began bombing Qaddafi regime forces in March 2011 with France and the United Kingdom ostensibly at the forefront of Operation Unified Protector. The regime forces crumbled under sanctions, naval strikes, and a tight no fly zone.<sup>89</sup> By October 2011 rebels caught up with Muammar Qaddafi and brutally murdered him in the streets in an attack that would be recorded on video and spread across the world.<sup>90</sup> NATO members believed this signified the end of the first Libyan Civil War and ended NATO operations in Libya in October.<sup>91</sup> However, the country was in shambles not long after.

Much like U.S. intervention in Iraq, a brutal dictator was deposed and killed at the hands of his own people. Also like Iraq, the removal of said dictator left an almost immediate power vacuum leading to internal strife, dissension among rival ethnic, political, and religious groups, as well as an inability for the prospective central government to provide security and basic goods and services. These are all recipes for

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<sup>87</sup> "Arab Uprising: Country by Country - Libya." BBC News. December 16, 2013. Accessed May 10, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-12482311>.

<sup>88</sup> "Resolution 1973 (2011)." United Nations Archives. March 17, 2011. Accessed May 11, 2016. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_03/20110927\\_110311-UNSCR-1973.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_03/20110927_110311-UNSCR-1973.pdf).

<sup>89</sup> "Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR Final Mission Stats." NATO. November 02, 2011. Accessed May 14, 2016. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_11/20111108\\_111107-factsheet\\_up\\_factsfigures\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_11/20111108_111107-factsheet_up_factsfigures_en.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> "Libya's Col Muammar Gaddafi Killed, Says NTC." BBC News. October 20, 2011. Accessed May 15, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15389550>.

<sup>91</sup> "Operation UNIFIED PROTECTOR Final Mission Stats." NATO. November 02, 2011. Accessed May 14, 2016.



a country to be torn asunder. Libya now has a barely functioning government that is battling an eastern region struggling for autonomy, a significant problem with radicalized Islamic terrorist groups including but not limited to the Islamic State group and Ansar al-Sharia.<sup>92</sup>

One of the worst outcomes of the Libya fiasco was the dispersal of Muammar Qaddafi's massive arsenal. While the U.S. and allies worked quickly to secure Libya's remaining chemical weapons, Qaddafi, in his paranoia, had stockpiled enormous quantities of conventional weapons. Between radicalized Islamist militias and other nefarious elements in Libya, various arms traffickers funneled huge amounts of weapons to ongoing conflicts throughout Africa and the Middle East (including the ongoing Syrian Civil War). Arms trafficking from Libya happened at a fevered pace, ostensibly supported by Qatar and Saudi Arabia who hoped to support Sunni Islamist militant groups throughout the region in a proxy war against perceived growing Iranian/Shi'a influence in the Arabian Gulf area.<sup>93</sup>

While it has not resulted in the enormous humanitarian crisis that Syria has become, the question that must be raised is how things got so bad, so quickly in Libya. Former State Department, National Security Council, and Department of Defense official Derek Chollet aptly stated, "When I looked at Libya, I thought, all right, we've got a small population, six million people, we have tremendous energy resources that had been underdeveloped, we had the international community that is extraordinarily unified

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<sup>92</sup> "Guide to Key Libyan Militias." BBC News. January 11, 2016. Accessed May 16, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19744533>.

<sup>93</sup> Shaw, Mark, and Fiona Mangan. "Illicit Trafficking and Libya's Transition: Profits and Losses." Peaceworks. 2014. Accessed May 20, 2016. <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW96-Illicit-Trafficking-and-Libyas-Transition.pdf>.

and invested in Libya's success. I mean, this is the opposite of Iraq in every way. So by God, if we can't succeed here, it should really make one think about embarking on these kind of efforts."<sup>94</sup> Mr. Chollet brings up some astute points. Libya's population of approximately six million people is diminutive compared to Iraq and Afghanistan with populations of 33 million and 30.5 million, respectively. Libya had an abundant amount of highly valuable non-renewable resources that simply needed further development to rapidly improve the country's economy. The coalition that was invested in toppling the oppressive Gadhafi regime included the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. While not quite as expansive as Operation Desert Storm, Operation Unified Protector look like a bit of a Gulf War reunion. The coalition was a large contingent of European and North American allies looking to stop a brutal dictator. However, with major distractions in both Syria and Iraq, the enthusiasm to fix things in Libya quickly faded.

Most concerning about the Libya situation, as it relates to smart power, is that once again, like in Iraq, the initial operation to achieve regime change was extremely successful, but the subsequent phase of establishing a steady government, a stable security environment, and preventing copious amounts of sectarian violence failed miserably. The biggest thorn in the side of the allies looking to establish all these conditions again was a multitude of violent non-state actors. Does this mean smart power is pre-destined to be ineffective in the face of violent non-state actors? Certainly

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<sup>94</sup> Becker, Jo, and Scott Shane. "In Their Own Words: The Libya Tragedy." The New York Times. February 27, 2016. Accessed May 21, 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/28/us/politics/libya-quotes.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/28/us/politics/libya-quotes.html?_r=0).

not. When I asked Joseph Nye, the creator of the term "smart power", about what went wrong in Libya, he responded that he thought Libya was smart power in its early stages, but it was undone by the failure to follow through. This is a fair criticism; one, which President Obama, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and former CIA director David Petraeus all admit, is largely true.<sup>95</sup> Former Secretary of State and famed General Colin Powell once said in regards to armed intervention, "You break it, you own it."<sup>96</sup> Most of the participants in the Libya situation hoped for the type of limited intervention seen in Operation Desert Storm. Allies wished to depose Muammar Qaddafi, help bring about democratic elections or at least some form of friendly, stable government, provide some aid, and go home.<sup>97</sup> Libya was not supposed to be another bogged down nation-building effort like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Libya suffered from deeply rooted problems that fomented under the Qaddafi regime. Infrastructure was extremely poor or nonexistent, including in areas that were critical to Libya's petrol-based economy. Security forces or a standing army outside of the forces loyal to Qaddafi were largely nonexistent. Due to Qaddafi's suppression of political parties and any form of dissension or discord, there were no real long-standing political institutions to speak of.<sup>98</sup> In essence, all those structures had to be built before Libya could stand on its own without heavy international assistance. European partners and even Arab nations had already left the country to its own devices following a hurried election as part of a sprint to a free and democratic Libya.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Samuels, David. "A Conversation With Colin Powell." *The Atlantic*. October 2007. Accessed May 28, 2016. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/04/a-conversation-with-colin-powell/305873/>.

<sup>97</sup> Robbins, James. "How West's Limited Intervention Failed Libya." *BBC News*. February 18, 2015. Accessed May 28, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31521282>.

<sup>98</sup> Kafala, Tarik. "Gaddafi's Quixotic and Brutal Rule." *BBC News*. October 20, 2011. Accessed August 28, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12532929>.

Libya is an important historical example to aid in understanding the limitations of smart power and the conditions that must exist for it to work effectively. Like hard and soft power, smart power is not a fix-all Band-Aid that can remedy any and all conflicts around the globe, especially against violent non-state actors. The remainder of this chapter will review the successes and failures of smart power from the three provided historical examples and will conclude with findings.

### *Successes in Smart Power*

Smart power can work effectively to bring about regime change. Through diplomatic efforts, targeted positive culture exporting, and true partner nation capacity building, the soft power component of smart power can go a long way in toppling a belligerent government. Additionally, hard power is an obvious important part of regime change thanks to air and missile strikes, support to anti-regime forces, economic sanctions, and even boots on the ground. The aftermath of deposing a sitting government is a weakness that will be addressed later but smart power is extremely effective in precipitating a change of regime. Though it was not as rapid as regime changes in Iraq and Libya, the eventual downfall of the Soviet Union, showed how incredibly successful smart power could be.

Smart power is also useful in limited armed intervention. The example of the first Gulf War showed what a group of willing and determined allies could do through carefully balanced hard and soft power measures. While the United States military might (hard power) was clearly a determining factor in the victory over Saddam Hussein

in Kuwait, U.S. goodwill and diplomatic efforts at the time were majorly contributing influences in that victory.

While it can hardly qualify as a major smart power victory yet, the fact that the United States and China have averted open armed conflict could be a testament to smart power. The U.S.'s enormous nuclear arsenal and conventional military strength has deterred China from any nuclear strike or open attacks against the United States for the last 30 years. Additionally the U.S.' soft power elements of diplomacy, foreign aid, and partnership has built a veritable bulwark of Asian nations (Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, etc.) to hedge against Chinese expansion in the Asian-Pacific region.<sup>99</sup> Smart power has shown itself to be capable of being an effective form of power in state-on-state conflicts.

### *Shortcomings in Smart Power*

It is difficult to pinpoint many limitations of smart power because it has not been widely applied in a large range of conflicts. Libya stands out as the biggest eyesore. Why did smart power really fail in Libya? To begin with, as Nye referenced, smart power was not fully applied in Libya. Hard power missile and air strikes coupled with diplomatic efforts through partner and international organizations (soft power) represented a partial application of smart power. What was missing was development of infrastructure and general improvement in security and living conditions. Libya was not prepared to

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<sup>99</sup> Campbell, Kurt, and Brian Andrews. "Explaining the US 'Pivot' to Asia." Chatham House - The Asia Group. August 2013. Accessed May 22, 2016. [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Americas/0813pp\\_pivottoasia.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Americas/0813pp_pivottoasia.pdf).

receive aid.<sup>100</sup> This is not necessarily a failing of smart power but represents a shortcoming of smart power in that a nation must be equipped to receive aid. Wide-scale corruption and a lack of trusted institutions can quickly squander whatever amounts of aid or funds are provided to a nation, as has been shown in Iraq and Afghanistan among many others.

Smart power is not capable of "fixing" systemic societal and cultural problems or fundamentally changing a nation. Issues such as demographics, governmental type, and societal structure are largely out of smart power's reach. Smart power is only capable of introducing effects (via hard power applications like airstrikes or soft power applications such as foreign aid and investment) and changes in international relations and relationships, as it relates to the state actor applying it.

### *Conclusion*

Smart power has been proven to be capable of finding success in state on state conflicts, crises, and long-term rivalries. The question remains is if it can prove successful against violent non-state actors, or perhaps if it can work in limiting and deterring VNSAs. In reality, both may be required. Smart power must be able to limit and deter VNSAs through strengthening nations who will have to deal with such belligerent entities but also must defeat violent non-state actors themselves, when necessary. The next chapter will look at a way ahead, smart power applications, and the ways in which they can and cannot deter and limit violent non-state actors.

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<sup>100</sup> Becker, Jo, and Scott Shane. "In Their Own Words: The Libya Tragedy." The New York Times. February 27, 2016. Accessed May 21, 2016.

## Chapter 4: The Way Ahead

### *Introduction*

Benjamin Franklin wrote in a letter to Jean-Baptiste Leroy in 1789, "Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."<sup>101</sup> It remains a frequently quoted idiom, however, Mr. Franklin forgot one thing: conflict. While declared or overt war between state actors may be minimal in the future, the conflict between violent non-state actors, other VNSAs, and state actors only seems to be growing. The variety of violent non-state actors as well as their overlap is growing as well.

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that can be considered violent non-state actors are often working with ideologically motivated violent non-state actors in areas such as drug trade, human trafficking, weapons trafficking, and other illicit smuggling.

Even as some ideologically motivated violent non-state actors dissipate or strive for legitimacy, some of their members who are used to criminal activities to fund operations will gravitate to those same activities either to take care of their families or because they lack occupational skills. For instance, the government of Colombia reached a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).<sup>102</sup> While the Colombian government and the FARC are both committed to the peace process, a rival revolutionary group, the National Liberation Army (ELN) is not as committed to the peace process, has given no concessions to the central government,

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<sup>101</sup> "Benjamin Franklin." Voices of Freedom. Accessed June 01, 2016.

[http://www.voicesoffreedom.us/voices/benjaminfranklin/benjaminfranklin4 .htm](http://www.voicesoffreedom.us/voices/benjaminfranklin/benjaminfranklin4.htm).

<sup>102</sup> Casey, Nicholas. "Colombia and FARC Reach Deal to End the Americas' Longest War." The New York Times. August 24, 2016. Accessed September 01, 2016.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/world/americas/colombia-farc-peace-deal.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/world/americas/colombia-farc-peace-deal.html?_r=0).

and is still attacking governmental forces.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, there is a segment of FARC (units they call "fronts") that refuses to lay down their arms, while another segment is increasingly turning away from ideology and into the alluring and profitable drug trade that is rampant in South America.<sup>104</sup>

In essence, Colombia is a good example of the fact that violent non-state actors may break up, reform, reshape, rename, and transform into something else entirely, but they appear to be growing not shrinking. The United States, as the only country with a military presence and economic interest in seemingly every corner of the globe, will continue to be faced with tough choices in which it may have to commit serious forces it cannot afford to or pose a smaller figure on the world stage. Either way, the U.S. has to at least maintain global engagement, which will inevitably lead to its necessity to intervene in or at least shape certain environments.

Isolationist or non-interventionist hopes and policies are pleasant in theory but impractical and unfeasible in the real world, especially considering the globalism that has encompassed the United States' economy. Conversely, dumping trillions of dollars and thousands of lives into seemingly endless conflicts is neither prudent nor viable. Smart power, if applied correctly and with commitment, represents a chance to: A) Go on the offensive and be proactive, B) Potentially save priceless lives and finite national treasure in the long term, and C) Focus U.S. foreign policy in a manner which hasn't been seen since the downfall of the Soviet Union. There is increasing focus on

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<sup>103</sup> "Stalled Peace Talks with Colombia's ELN Mean Energy Infrastructure Attacks and Kidnap Risks to Persist throughout 2016." IHS Jane's Country Risk Daily Report. August 08, 2016. Accessed September 01, 2016. <http://www.janes.com/article/62831/stalled-peace-talks-with-colombia-s-el-n-mean-energy-infrastructure-attacks-and-kidnap-risks-to-persist-throughout-2016>.

<sup>104</sup> Iyengar, Rishi. "FARC Splinter Unit Says It Won't Lay Down Arms." Time. July 7, 2016. Accessed September 01, 2016. <http://time.com/4396170/colombia-rebels-farc-ceasefire-agreement/>.



conventional adversaries such as Russia and China thanks to military leaders such as U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Mark Milley and Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster (author of Dereliction of Duty).<sup>105</sup> However, the U.S. military is not prepared to continually encounter and attempt to limit and deter violent non-state actors outside of Iraq, Afghanistan, and to a more limited extent Syria, Libya, and Yemen.

Africa is currently a hotbed of activity. Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance Army, and other violent non-state actors present a myriad of dilemmas for not only the African nations suffering from their violence but also for the United States, that is concerned with regional stability and U.S. interests in the region, but has a war weary public tired of sending troops into harm's way in areas perceived not to be vital to U.S. security.<sup>106</sup> It is unlikely the U.S. population would support major troop deployments to areas like the Central African Republic and Nigeria. However, here as well, smart power could be a long-term solution that could bring about a more stable Africa without committing a large ground force.

The goal of this chapter is to clarify and contextualize possible U.S. applications of smart power in order to deter and limit violent non-state actors. Additionally, this chapter will address possible pitfalls and limitations inherent in the aforementioned applications. Some applications will be extracted from the three historical examples of smart power while others will be described from ongoing events or hypothetical applications. Because smart power is a careful balance of hard and soft power, the

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<sup>105</sup> Freedberg, Sydney J., Jr. "Milley: Shrink 'Big Target' HQs As Russia Outguns Us." *Breaking Defense*. April 7, 2016. Accessed June 01, 2016. <http://breakingdefense.com/2016/04/milley-shrink-big-target-hqs-as-russia-outguns-us/>.

<sup>106</sup> Gaouette, Nicole. "Terror Kills as Many or More in Africa vs Mideast." *CNN*. May 10, 2016. Accessed June 02, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/10/politics/africa-terror-isis-boko-haram/>.

applications of smart power will be broken into those two categories as well as one more that will be called "composite".

### *Soft Power*

#### **Foreign Aid and Investment**

Foreign aid is almost the default thought individuals have when soft power is brought up. Unfortunately, there are several misnomers associated with foreign aid and investment. Some proponents of hard power and neoconservatives view this soft power application as weak and essentially buying off an adversary. However, foreign aid and investment are about much more than buying off an adversary or even an ally. If that were the case, then the United States could desist from massive defense expenditures and just bribe the belligerent state actors of the world.

Foreign aid and investment are not just ineffective if improperly applied but can be extremely harmful and even cause significant deep-rooted problems in societies. Foreign aid that winds up in the hands of corrupt government officials and other nefarious actors can reward corruption, graft, and bribery. This very situation played itself out significantly in Tunisia (the set off point for the Arab Spring), where U.S. aid to the country was high but corruption was so rampant that street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi self-immolated on December 2011. The young man from Sidi Bouzid suffered one too many injustices from a corrupt system that threatened his livelihood necessary to take care of his family of eight. While the U.S. can hardly be held solely accountable for the death of Mohamed Bouazizi, the foreign aid given to Tunisian dictator Zine el

Abidine Ben Ali's crooked government only fueled the corruption that precipitated this event.<sup>107</sup>

Despite the negative impacts that can occur from ill-conceived or misapplied foreign aid, the proper and judicious investment of U.S. dollars in foreign nations can inculcate an environment that is less conducive to violent non-state actors. That is not to say that VNSAs will cease to exist in nations with stable governments and at least sustainable economies. Even Europe is suffering from a wide span of terrorist attacks since the Islamic State group attack in Paris in November 2015.<sup>108</sup> However, a populace with the opportunity for decent quality of life and moderate faith in government is less likely to foster an environment in which violent non-state actors can act with impunity or expand largely unbounded.

An example of positive and potentially atmosphere improving aid includes the Bush administration's \$15 billion President's Emergency Programs for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is mostly earmarked for Africa. The program has continued under President Obama.<sup>109</sup> This kind of aid has positive benefits in a number of areas: 1) It shows good will and dedication on behalf of the United States on a continent that is suffering from conflict, poverty, and in some areas an epidemic of AIDS/HIV, 2) The reduction of HIV/AIDS rates can offer economic improvement and increase trust in the central government, and 3) In addition to saving lives from AIDS/HIV, a study from the

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<sup>107</sup> Whiton, Christian. *Smart Power: Between Diplomacy and War*. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013. Pg. 13-14

<sup>108</sup> Michaels, Jim. "Analysis: String of Terror Attacks in Europe Likely to Continue." *USA Today*. July 29, 2016. Accessed August 12, 2016. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/07/26/analysis-string-if-terror-attacks-europe-likely-continue/87578584/>.

<sup>109</sup> Armitage, Richard, and Joseph Nye. "CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America." CSIS. November 6, 2007. Accessed February 15, 2016. [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/media/csis/pubs/071106\\_csissmartpowerreport.pdf](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/071106_csissmartpowerreport.pdf).

University of Stanford showed the program also decreased rates of pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria, which in turn positively impacts security conditions<sup>110</sup>. PEPFAR is a great example because of the extensive costing studies and efficiency measures used to ensure every dollar is spent in the most effective way possible. Additionally PEPFAR collaborates with other governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to target investments in effective programs. PEPFAR is the model for progressive and effective foreign aid.

### **Cultural Exportation**

Cultural exportation was a major factor in the U.S. victory over the Soviet Union. The virtues and values of freedom and an open culture won out against censorship and subjugation to an oppressive regime. So why doesn't the United States just spread those values everywhere and the world will fall in line, enjoying freedom, baseball, hot dogs, and the American way. Unfortunately the idea of cultural exportation is not that simplistic. In reality there are two considerations regarding cultural exportation: 1) Cultural exportation must include values exportation. For example, many young Iranians enjoy American film, style, and even music. However, there is not an overwhelming swell of support for America or even major pro-Western sentiments. 2) The United States must at least attempt to emulate the values it tries to export with its culture. Preaching for the rest of the world to operate under the values of honor, dignity, and truth is at least somewhat undermined by practices and institutions such as

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<sup>110</sup> Richter, Ruthann. "PEPFAR Has Saved Lives – and Not Just from HIV/AIDS, Stanford Study Finds." Scope Blog. May 15, 2012. Accessed July 02, 2016. <http://scopeblog.stanford.edu/2012/05/15/pepfar-has-saved-lives-and-not-just-from-hivaids-stanford-study-finds/>.

Guantanamo Bay, extraordinary rendition, enhanced interrogation techniques (sometimes torture), and CIA black sites.

Even by being cognizant of the aforementioned considerations, shaping foreign environments to be friendly to U.S. objectives and ideals, let alone making them poor atmospheres for violent non-state actors, is a difficult task. Cultural exportation may find more success among European nations and more Westernized nations due to the smaller gap in cultural disparities. However, the application still falls under smart power and should be a key component of every smart power strategic planning. Unlike some other measures, this application must be implemented not only in active conflicts but also across the globe.

### **Information Operations**

In the United States military's Joint Publication 3-13, the Secretary of Defense defined information operations as, "the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities (IRCs) in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own."<sup>111</sup> The concept of information operations (IO) has become considered an integral part of military operations, even if it is not always treated as such. IO is supposed to be integrated at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. However, IO should not be only a military function but employed in any smart power approach. The last portion of the definition of information

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<sup>111</sup> "Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations." DTIC. November 20, 2014. Accessed July 14, 2016. [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_13.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_13.pdf).

operations regarding influencing, disrupting, corrupting, and usurping the decision making of adversaries can be applied to violent non-state actors.

Information operations are not just the use of propaganda, though it is a facet of IO. It includes the employment of psychological operations, military deception, electronic warfare, computer network operations, and operations security.

1) Psychological operations (PSYOPS) include propaganda and narrative shaping through means such as leaflet drops, aerial and ground radio broadcasts, and loudspeaker announcing. An additional component of psychological operations is denying the adversary space and means to conduct their own narrative shaping or deliver messages. Selective censorship, jamming of communications, and spoofing can thoroughly disrupt an adversary's capability to conduct their own information operations.

2) Military deception (MILDEC), attempts to mislead or deceive enemy forces during warfare, is slightly less important and decidedly more difficult against violent non-state actors but can be a fruitful part of information operations. Military deception correlates closely with operations security (OPSEC) because of the need to keep operations secret or at least ambiguous in order to deceive and confuse adversaries.

3) Electronic warfare (EW) is the action of using the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum or directed energy to manipulate the spectrum, attack an enemy, or deny the enemy use of the EM spectrum. Electronic warfare can be applied across multiple domains such as land, air, sea, and space. Pro-Russian irregular forces have employed electronic warfare with spectacular effect against Ukrainian forces and the Ukrainian population in both Crimea and eastern Ukraine. However, the employment of EW must

be coupled with thorough intelligence collection efforts to understand communications constructs and identify critical command and control (C2) nodes. The disruption or degradation, even temporarily, of enemy communications and C2 can cause an adversary's campaign and operations to be disjointed and weakened.

4) Computer network operations (CNO) have become an extremely important aspect of information operations against violent non-state actors in the 21st Century. CNO can be offensive in nature (computer network attack), defensive (cyber protection), and used as a key intelligence collection tool (cyber surveillance). The Islamic State group has been prodigious in its use of the cyber domain. The group uses it for recruiting, propaganda, and targeting of U.S. personnel and other adversaries.

They purportedly were able to infiltrate the U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) social media account in 2015.<sup>112</sup> Their recruiting efforts have included targeted marketing campaigns that were aimed at various different segments of potential recruits. The United States has struggled to deter and limit the Islamic State in the cyber domain, especially in the social media realm. Twitter accounts created by cyber jihadists or sympathizers are recreated seemingly as quickly as they're taken down. Similarly, extremist right wing and anti-immigration groups throughout Europe are waging a significant information operations campaign on the Internet. Disrupting and distorting cyber campaigns by violent non-state actors can have a severely detrimental effect on adversarial abilities to recruit, shape narratives, and inculcate fear through graphic violence and imagery. Additionally, tracking the movements, networks, and objectives of

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<sup>112</sup> Lamothe, Dan. "U.S. Military Social Media Accounts Apparently Hacked by Islamic State Sympathizers." The Washington Post. January 12, 2015. Accessed July 17, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/01/12/centcom-twitter-account-apparently-hacked-by-islamic-state-sympathizers/>

violent non-state actors in the cyber domain can assist in real-world kinetic operations and help shape friendly IO objectives. Sometimes it is more effective to watch and track than to attack an adversary's cyber presence.

Information operations require a balance of efforts. Increased psychological operations may reduce operational security and therefore lessen military deception efforts. Information operations campaigns will be essential to deterring and limiting violent non-state actors. Shaping the environment and the narrative will rob the VNSA of legitimacy, sanctuary, and the initiative. Considering its importance, the realm of information operations does not get the attention it deserves from the U.S. government.

### **Public Diplomacy**

Public diplomacy is about more than just diplomats glad-handing one another at the UN or at international conferences. Diplomacy is often thought of as government-to-government engagement in the public arena. In reality it is about engaging populations and establishing good will and connections that foster positive and enduring environments. Those relationships that are established through diplomacy can result in impressive global support as evidenced by the tremendous outpouring of support and unity shown by a multitude of countries during events such as the first Gulf War and following the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

The United States has lessened its prowess in public diplomacy drastically since the end of the Cold War. Recent Presidents have made modest efforts to reverse that trend. President Clinton attempted to address the issue by establishing an



Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy.<sup>113</sup> President Obama has emphasized establishing relationships with and working in concert with foreign nations to show America is a good global citizen following years of tarnish from the Iraq War. However, the Obama regime's efforts to increase public diplomacy were hurt by an attack on the U.S. embassy in Libya as well as increased scrutiny on the drone strike program that was responsible for hundreds of bombings across Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen. Collateral damage, widespread fear among populations, and a slew of civilian casualties from the drone strikes has led some to believe that the United States is trigger happy in regards to "surgical" aerial bombings.

Public diplomacy is not an overnight smart power application. In some instances it could take generations to have a lasting and measurable impact. In addition to public diplomacy being sometimes a long play, it can be difficult to quantify in terms of success. Realists and neorealists tend to see diplomacy as ineffective and an afterthought. However, public diplomacy can have major long-term benefits.

Public opinion pollster John Zogby addressed the necessary approach of public diplomacy in the CSIS Commission on Smart Power report when he stated that, "A smarter public diplomacy is one that shows respect towards other countries and a willingness to understand local needs and local issues."<sup>114</sup> Currently, public diplomacy is largely encompassed within Department of State activities. The Smart Power Commission recommended an autonomous or at least quasi-autonomous organization

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<sup>113</sup> "Under Secretaries of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs - Principal Officers - People - Department History - Office of the Historian." U.S. Department of State. 2014. Accessed August 02, 2016. <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/principalofficers/under-secretary-for-public-diplomacy>.

<sup>114</sup> Armitage, Richard, and Joseph Nye. "CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America." CSIS. November 6, 2007.

responsible for diplomacy that falls under the State Department. Alternatively, a sort of Public Diplomacy Joint Task Force could address the need for increased emphasis on diplomacy. This prospective task force could be comprised of liaison officers or representatives from the State Department, Department of Defense, National Security Council, the President's staff, and even the Treasury Department. Additionally, this task force could coordinate with non-governmental organizations in order to develop targets and objectives as well as maximize efficiency in lines of effort.

There are three key areas in which public diplomacy can and should improve: strategic engagement, educational/informational exchanges, and ground level engagement. Strategic engagement and communication is important in public diplomacy because it is the overarching guiding force behind diplomacy at lower levels. Educational and informational exchanges provide an environment that allows the free flow of ideas that can be positively pervasive in nations that the United States wishes to influence. Finally, ground level engagement is crucial. It is the grass roots movement that can foment bottom up fundamental change in the security environment that will deter and limit violent non-state actors.

### *Hard Power*

#### **Air, Drone, Missile, and Naval Strikes (Joint Fires)**

Joint fires has been the hard power tool of choice by U.S. Presidents since the First Gulf War showed the effect that could be achieved through the use of precision-guided munitions (PGMs). Despite the fact that they still produce scores of civilian casualties, the use of precision strikes from aircraft (manned and unmanned), land

attack cruise missiles, and ship/sub-launched munitions is often seen as the least messy and simplest hard power measure. Due to the variety of U.S. platforms joint fires can be conducted from (ships, submarines, land-based launchers, aircraft, and drones), they can be utilized across the globe. Missiles and other precision-guided munitions don't require the costly logistical support, danger pay, combat search and rescue support, basing rights, and status of forces agreement (SOFA) that ground troops do. Short of being shot down by air defense systems, there is no worry about missiles and PGMs getting captured.

Joint fires are extremely lethal and can be devastating against conventional forces and state actors. The U.S. military are experts at effectively dissecting and dismantling command and control structures, critical infrastructure, civil-military industrial bases, and military formations. The United States has had some success targeting violent non-state actors with joint fires but the effect is not nearly as profound as it is with state actors. The most important part about bringing joint fires against VNSAs is delineating targets and striking them with limited effect against the civilian population and infrastructure that is not supporting the group(s).

### **Ground Assault**

Decidedly less simple and often more expensive than joint fires (in both national treasure and human capital), the ground assault is now considered somewhat of a last option. However, the use of Special Forces to coordinate fires and support proxy forces or host nation forces is seen as an operation short of a true ground assault. The last major ground assault that took place was the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The initial

invasion was considered a major success as American tank forces and ground troops moved swiftly to take Baghdad and soundly defeated the Iraqi Army. A ground assault against violent non-state actors is more difficult due to the proclivity of the VNSAs to blend into the civilian population and not fight as a known enemy. National leadership has been, and will continue to be, leery of a protracted, bloody ground battle. Ground assaults against a violent non-state actor are sure to be costly and even after years of campaigning there may not be a "victory" or anything that looks like it.

A ground assault against a violent non-state actors has a greater chance to succeed under the following conditions: 1) A terminal objective at the outset. A campaign or ground assault can be flexible and adaptive but must set a specific objective in order to unify efforts and better drive commander's decision making. 2) Inclusion of host nation forces (security and military). This may not always be possible but the co-opting and collaboration with host nation forces can better assist ground forces in identifying VNSA fighters, leaders, operatives and supporters from the local population. Depending on the host nation forces reputation and rapport with the local population this cooperation can add legitimacy to a ground assault. 3) High quality intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination. It is critically important to separate the violent non-state actor from the population in order to protect civilians, isolate VNSA personnel, and target critical nodes within the organization.

Ground assault is still a viable option against violent non-state actors, but is dependent upon situations. The U.S. public has recently clamored for ground intervention by U.S. troops in Syria and Iraq in order to defeat the Islamic State group.

However, the public could quickly sour on such actions after a plethora of U.S. deaths or if the situation begins to look untenable.

The French intervention in Mali (named Operation Serval) was one of the most successful recent ground assaults against a violent non-state actor. The French were requested to intervene by the Malian transitional government and acted based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085.<sup>115</sup> French forces enjoyed popular support as a poll showed 96% of Malians support the French intervention.<sup>116</sup> The French military performed admirably and received assistance from partner nations, including the United States who provided several heavy vertical lift aircraft to move French equipment and personnel forces forward.<sup>117</sup> The French moved rapidly and hammered Islamist forces including Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA). France showed that despite the inherent risk in ground assault, it can be extremely effective and sometimes absolutely necessary.

## **Economic Sanctions**

Despite foreign aid being a part of soft power, economic sanctions are punitive in nature and therefore belong in the hard power category. Sanctions alone are unlikely to defeat a violent non-state actor. How can one implement sanctions against an actor who is not a nation? The biggest ways that economic sanctions can help in deterring and limiting violent non-state actors is to punish state actors supporting violent non-

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<sup>115</sup> "Security Council Authorizes Deployment of African-Led International Support Mission in Mali for Initial Year-Long Period." UN News Center. December 20, 2012. Accessed August 07, 2016. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10870.doc.htm>.

<sup>116</sup> "Interactive: Mali Speaks." Al Jazeera English. January 21, 2013. Accessed August 02, 2016. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2013/01/201312113451635182.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Carroll, Chris. "Pentagon: US Air Force Flying French Troops, Equipment to Mali." Stars and Stripes. January 22, 2013. Accessed August 02, 2016. <http://www.stripes.com/news/africa/pentagon-us-air-force-flying-french-troops-equipment-to-mali-1.204831>.

state actors (as had been done against Libya when Gadhafi was supporting and directing violent non-state actors) and cutting off the violent non-state actors' access to black markets and illicit funds. Despite its limited abilities in degrading violent non-state actors it must still be a component in a smart power campaign.

### *Composite*

### **Coalition Building**

Coalitions are an important part of any smart power campaign. The burden sharing of a true coalition of the willing reduces the liability on the United States to be the main load carrier. Building an ad hoc coalition of consensus is a composite of soft and hard power. There are aspects of public diplomacy that come into play, as seen with the coalition building of the First Gulf War. Conversely, there are significant hard power elements of operating a combined multi-national joint (coalition) task force. Combined or coordinated air strikes, joint ground assaults, and intelligence sharing can all be considered hard power functions.

The building of coalitions has multiple benefits: 1) The inclusion of allies lessens the burden on major players such as the United States and United Kingdom, 2) a multi-national effort makes operations have a joint and less unilateral appearance which can be extremely positive for narrative shaping and information operations, and 3) Allies, especially non-Western, can have diplomatic and intelligence in-roads that are otherwise unavailable to the United States and other Western allies. There is an increasing likelihood that there will be more ad hoc or single-issue coalitions in the future than long-standing institution operations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO). Coalition building is a critical component in almost any smart power campaign against a violent non-state actor.

## **Capacity Building**

In the Center for Strategic & International Studies Commission on Smart Power, retired Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Thomas R. Pickering stated, "Multilateral capacity building goes beyond the instant coffee of coalition building."<sup>118</sup> As was previously mentioned, ad hoc coalition building is an important part of any smart power campaign and will likely only increase in frequency and necessity. However, coalition building can be ineffective or even fruitless without multilateral capacity building. Building partner capacity goes beyond just foreign aid, which is why it falls under "composite". Multilateral capacity building is the levying of alliances, assets, and training capabilities to build allies' abilities to defend themselves and foster positive and stable security environments.

Capacity building is potentially one of the most profitable smart power applications in deterring and limiting violent non-state actors in the sense that the payoff could be lucrative. Helping to empower a partner or ally up to the point that they can fight and beat back violent non-state actors of their own accord or with limited assistance truly lessens the need and frequency of U.S. forces to commit themselves to another costly campaign. Much like foreign aid and development, funding for capacity building must be judicious and prudent. The bottom line, however, is that money talks. A 2011 RAND Corporation study showed that spending in capacity building was the most

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<sup>118</sup> Armitage, Richard, and Joseph Nye. "CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America." CSIS. November 6, 2007.

important component. The study noted that, "More spending correlates with greater effectiveness. The evidence demonstrates that this is generally true when it comes to building partner capacity, but there are notable exceptions. When resources are used to 'buy friends,' the correlation between expenditure and capacity built is weaker."<sup>119</sup>

Capacity building is one of the "medicines" that can provide a cure to the disease rather than the symptoms, as it pertains to violent non-state actors. Multilateral capacity building has the capability to provide a lasting ability to foster and protect a sociopolitical and security environment that is not conducive to violent non-state actors.

### *Conclusion*

As was previously discussed regarding the forms of power (hard, soft, and smart), all of the reviewed potential smart power applications are not without their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, none of the options previously listed can work as a one-size-fits-all, all-encompassing magical Band-Aid that will get after the violent non-state actor problem set. Even the option of multilateral coalition building is hampered by the precondition of a state being moderately stable and having a halfway competent central government. Failed states and those experiencing significant internal strife cannot have their capacity built up enough to deter and limit violent non-state actors. States such as this must rely on built coalitions, including those from organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, and the African Union. Given the inherent flaws in each smart power application there must be a holistic approach to

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<sup>119</sup> Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D.P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah. "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?" RAND Corporation. 2013. Accessed August 02, 2016. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html>.



waging a smart power campaign or even more importantly a smart power strategy to deter and limit violent non-state actors globally.

In addition to the balance of strengths and weaknesses of the listed smart power applications, there is a need to tailor or customize smart power campaigns in large geographic regions, countries, and even specific provinces or districts. States with economic weakness, infrastructure problems and limited militaries and security forces may require more capacity building and foreign aid and investment. Whereas, a state that has a more stable government and efficient military but suffers from internal security issues from extremist or ideologically driven violent non-state actors may benefit more from a smart power campaign focused on information operations, cultural exportation, and joint precision fires.

In order to significantly alter the way the United States and its allies engage violent non-state actors there must be a significant change in the paradigm of fighting VNSAs; from a reactive to a pro-active approach. In support of execution of this goal, the United States must develop and fund all the capabilities needed to perform these smart power operations in the same manner that the military is funded today. In the next and final chapter, the findings and analysis of smart power as it relates to violent non-state actors will be reviewed and presented as a viable and efficient approach that can hopefully reduce the current "whack-a-mole" game being played against VNSAs today.

## Chapter 5: Concluding Discussion and Recommendations

In August 2016, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) co-hosted an event with Georgetown University called "Mad Scientist 2016: Strategic Security Environment in 2025 and Beyond".<sup>120</sup> In this event series, a multitude of speakers from academia and industry (e.g., DoD outsiders) are brought in to discuss topics ranging from mega cities/dense urban environments to cyber security. The most recent Mad Scientist was focused on the future Operational and Security Environment. There were varying opinions on what the future held or if it could be predicted by a number of experts in future forecasting and quantitative/qualitative analysis. Despite contention over some issues such as global interdependence and technological singularity, there was one area of common agreement: violent non-state actors would continue to persist, and asymmetric threats would only increase in the future. State-on-state conflict is becoming, and will likely remain, the outlier rather than the norm.

Several senior Army officials admitted that in a resource constrained environment, the U.S. military must be prepared to respond to three types of threats: 1) Great power conflict, such as with Russia and China, 2) Grey zone conflict, or operations and actions in an ambiguous manner by state actors, short of war, and 3) violent non-state actors (referred to by the military typically as the counterterrorism (CT)/counterinsurgency (CI) fight). Besides just the U.S. Army or the whole Department

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<sup>120</sup> Sheftick, Gary. "'Mad Scientists' Consider the Security Environment of 2050." U.S. Army. August 09, 2016. Accessed August 15, 2016. [https://www.army.mil/article/172991/mad\\_scientists\\_consider\\_the\\_security\\_environment\\_of\\_2050](https://www.army.mil/article/172991/mad_scientists_consider_the_security_environment_of_2050)

of Defense, the entire U.S. government must develop a strategy to deal with the three aforementioned threats without expending copious amounts of blood and capital.<sup>121</sup>

Smart power, as noted in a previous chapter where I discussed historical examples, can be successful against state actors. The question posed in this thesis has been, can it be successful against violent non-state actors? History has not shown much empirical evidence to confirm this. However, there are examples of elements of specific smart power applications having great effect against violent non-state actors. Hard power applications, especially precision-guided munitions strikes, are easy to see as effective against VNSAs provided they don't inflict significant civilian casualties. But smart power applications such as information operations and narrative shaping can have a major impact as seen with the Sunni Awakening in 2007 in Iraq.<sup>122</sup> Coalition building can lead to significant successes such as the French achievement in Mali in 2013. While assisting the central Malian government the French also utilized coalition partner capabilities to ensure mission success.<sup>123</sup>

Building partner capacity (multilateral capacity building) is potentially one of the strongest smart power applications there is. Multilateral capacity building is proactive in nature and can instill resiliency in state actors to deter and limit violent non-state actors before they become out of control problems. Violent non-state actors are only growing in quantity, not shrinking. It is inevitable that states will have to deal with security

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<sup>121</sup> "Priorities for Our Nation's Army with General Mark A. Milley." Center for Strategic and International Studies. June 23, 2016. Accessed August 14, 2016. <https://www.csis.org/events/priorities-our-nations-army-general-mark-milley>.

<sup>122</sup> Roggio, Bill. "The Sunni Awakening." The Long War Journal. May 03, 2007. Accessed August 15, 2016. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/the\\_sunni\\_awakening.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/the_sunni_awakening.php).

<sup>123</sup> Jeanene Vilmer, Jean-Baptiste, and Olivier Schmitt. "Frogs of War: Explaining the New French Military Interventionism." War on the Rocks. October 14, 2015. Accessed August 15, 2016. <http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/frogs-of-war-explaining-the-new-french-military-interventionism/>.

concerns from VNSAs. Some of the greatest powers in the world, such as the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France, and India, have been faced with critical security threats from violent non-state actors numerous times in recent years. Due to the inevitable outcome of being faced with such threats, one of the top priorities must be in preparing states to engage proactively with this eventuality. Building capacity and hopefully resiliency is as important, if not more important, than responding to such threats with pure hard power.<sup>124</sup> The U.S. has launched thousands of air and missile strikes in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen; yet those countries remain terrifically unstable.<sup>125</sup> Why? Because these states do not have the capacity to face security problems by themselves or even with limited intervention. Afghanistan is currently attempting to address security dilemmas with a myriad of violent non-state actors, including but not limited to Khorasan Group (al-Qaeda revanchists), the Taliban, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, and the Islamic State group. Not inconsequentially, all three of those states are hampered with ridiculous amounts of corruption and incompetence at almost every level of government.<sup>126</sup> Afghanistan is currently attempting to cope with multiple security dilemmas with a myriad of violent non-state actors, including but not limited to Khorasan Group (al-Qaeda revanchists), the Taliban, Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), and the Islamic State group, in addition to external VNSAs including Lashkar-e-Taiiba

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<sup>124</sup> Marquis, Jefferson P., Jennifer DP Moroney, Justin Beck, Derek Eaton, Scott Hiromoto, David R. Howell, Janet Lewis, Charlotte Lynch, Michael J. Neumann, and Cathryn Quantic Thurston. "Developing an Army Strategy for Building Partner Capacity for Stability Operations." RAND - Arroyo Center. 2010. Accessed August 17, 2016.

[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG942.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG942.pdf).

<sup>125</sup> Cordesman, Anthony. "The Common Lessons of Benghazi, Algeria, Mali, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Arab Spring." Center for Strategic and International Studies. January 28, 2013. Accessed August 18, 2016. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/common-lessons-benghazi-algeria-mali-tunisia-egypt-syria-iraq-yemen-afghanistan-pakistan>.

<sup>126</sup> Lobe, Jim. "CORRUPTION: Afghanistan, Iraq Near Bottom of Transparency Index." Inter Press Service. November 17, 2009. Accessed August 23, 2016. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/11/corruption-afghanistan-iraq-near-bottom-of-transparency-index/>.

(LeT) and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In spite of 15 years of funding and training, Afghan security forces are ill equipped nor willing to take on this murderer's row of VNSAs. Meanwhile the country practically runs on graft and corruption.

Part of building resiliency is not just building up security forces; it also involves helping to provide economic strength and employment. These two factors can help to promote stability and foster an environment that is not as conducive to VNSAs. There are two important considerations regarding foreign aid and investment to improve foreign economic stability and employment rates: 1) A prosperous economy does not in itself eliminate violent non-state actors. Indeed most of the 9/11 attackers were Saudi Arabians from one of the most prosperous countries in the world. However, economic improvement does at least present the possibility of limiting violent non-state actor recruiting to what could be termed the "true believers"<sup>127</sup> and 2) Improving economic stability and employment rates in foreign nations is neither easy nor guaranteed. The United States itself struggles at times to improve its own jobless rates and continues to see a shrinking middle class that is growing increasingly concerned with wealth distribution. Investing heavily in foreign countries is a hard sell with an American public that is growing ever more wary of various forms of foreign aid in countries that don't "benefit" the U.S. citizenry, on the surface. Despite these two concerns, foreign aid and investment as a resiliency-building measure is an important potential tool in the smart

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<sup>127</sup> Byrd, Miemie Wynn. "Combating Terrorism A Socio-Economic Strategy." Joint Force Quarterly, no. 41 (2016): 15-19. 2006. Accessed August 17, 2016. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a482160.pdf>.

power toolbox. Conversely, there is a track record of failed states having overwhelming problems with violent non-state actors.<sup>128</sup>

Smart power is not without its drawbacks. It cannot solve every situation and every global security problem. Inevitably it will have limited effect against a violent non-state actor if applied inappropriately. There are a number of conditions among state actors that will essentially stop smart power in its tracks. These conditions do not mean instant death for smart power but it will be incredibly difficult to succeed in spite of them. The conditions are:

1) No Central Governance. Without a form of central governance there can be no overarching policies, no unifying political force, and autonomous regions will fight for power, legitimacy, and terrain. Somalia is an unfortunate example of this model. Without a functioning central government, the Somalian state has failed time and time again to deter and limit the Islamic Courts Union (ICU)<sup>129</sup>, al-Shabaab, and other violent non-state actors.<sup>130</sup> The central government doesn't have to be democratic or even incredibly efficient, but it must be legitimate enough to win the support of the population and not alienate itself from the international community.

2) Rampant Corruption. Corruption is detrimental and corroding to any government. Though just as the human condition persists, corruption exists in virtually every government in the world. However, widespread and pervasive corruption is

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<sup>128</sup> Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States in a World of Terror." Council on Foreign Relations. August 01, 2002. Accessed August 18, 2016. <http://www.cfr.org/fragile-or-failed-states/failed-states-world-terror/p4733>.

<sup>129</sup> "Mapping Militants - Islamic Courts Union." Stanford University. March 30, 2016. Accessed August 18, 2016. <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/107>.

<sup>130</sup> Schiffrin, Nick. "Propaganda Is Effective Weapon as Al-Shabab Makes Resurgence." PBS. April 22, 2016. Accessed August 19, 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/propaganda-is-effective-weapon-as-al-shabab-makes-resurgence/>.

poisonous to soft and smart power applications.<sup>131</sup> Violent non-state actors are capable of thriving in states rife with corruption due to their ability to buy influence and coerce active or passive support from power players in the state.<sup>132</sup> The Taliban has proved adept at utilizing the prevalent grift and corruption across the country to elude targeting and capture from local national security forces. A state actor need not be free of corruption (which is virtually impossible); however, there must be enough good governance and faith in government to allow for the absorption of aid, assistance, and investment. In a state with rampant corruption, such as Tunisia before the Arab Spring, increased foreign aid can actually worsen an already bad situation.<sup>133</sup>

3) No Semblance of Border Control. Border control is challenging, as the United States itself knows well enough. There is a fine line between preventing mass influxes of potential threats and tightening up a border to the point of being a police state like North Korea. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is almost nonexistent at points; especially near the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. This lack of a boundary in crucial areas has allowed Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Islamic State group affiliates to filter across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border countless times.<sup>134</sup> This has allowed violent non-state actors to re-arm and gain sanctuary to figuratively lick their wounds and return to the battle space.

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<sup>131</sup> Michael, Bryane, Christopher Hartwell, and Bulat Nureev. "Soft Power: A Double-Edged Sword?" BRICS Business Magazine. 2012. Accessed August 19, 2016. <http://bricsmagazine.com/en/articles/soft-power-a-double-edged-sword>.

<sup>132</sup> Sewall, Sarah. "Corruption: A 21st-Century Security Challenge." *The Foreign Service Journal*. June 2016. Accessed October 15, 2016. <http://www.afsa.org/corruption-21st-century-security-challenge>.

<sup>133</sup> Srebernik, Dor. "Inequality and Corruption: Drivers of Tunisia's Revolution." *Inquiries Journal* 6, no. 10 (2014): 1-2. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/924/inequality-and-corruption-drivers-of-tunisias-revolution>.

<sup>134</sup> "Understanding War: Pakistan and Afghanistan." Institute for the Study of War. 2009. Accessed June 24, 2016. <http://www.understandingwar.org/pakistan-and-afghanistan>.

It took the United States years to get a handle on foreign insurgent and terrorist groups in Iraq partially because the border between Syria and Iraq was extremely porous and most foreign fighters (especially suicide bombers) were infiltrating Iraq through there.<sup>135</sup> At the time of the Iraqi insurgency's highest activity (during U.S. occupation), al-Qaeda in Iraq was funneling fighters through the border while allegedly conducting meetings in Syria.<sup>136</sup> The regions [or areas] where violent non-state actors find sanctuary doesn't even need to be a willing participant; they just need to have extremely poor border security. The border between Iraq and Syria has become even more blurred during the Syrian Civil War as the Islamic State group established lines of communications (LOCs) from ar-Raqqah, Syria (their headquarters) to Mosul, Iraq.<sup>137</sup> Establishing moderately successful border security is critical to stemming the flow of weapons, money, logistical support, and personnel between states. When General David Petraeus made border security a top priority, the amount of foreign fighters coming into Iraq decreased dramatically.

4) Limited or No U.S. Domestic Support. Not every conflict is going to have the kind of support World War II or the First Gulf War has, especially as the United States populace is war weary following over fifteen years of war with no end in sight. However, there has to be a decent amount of domestic support for smart power to be able to work against violent non-state actors. Several smart power applications, such as foreign aid

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<sup>135</sup> Yates, Dean, and Sean Maguire. "Foreign Militants Entering Iraq Down 50 Pct: Petraeus." Reuters. February 11, 2008. Accessed July 24, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-petraeus-fighters-idUSYAT15542120080211>.

<sup>136</sup> Khan, Azmat. "FRONTLINE: What Is Al Qaeda Doing in Syria?" PBS. February 23, 2012. Accessed June 25, 2016. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-is-al-qaeda-doing-in-syria/>.

<sup>137</sup> Forrest, Caitlin. "ISIS Sanctuary Map: August 19, 2016." Institute for the Study of War. August 19, 2016. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-sanctuary-map-august-19-2016>.



and investment and multilateral capacity building, can take years and even in excess of a decade to take hold and cause quantifiable effects.<sup>138</sup> The U.S. population could tire of billions of dollars being spent on smart power applications with seemingly no immediate impact in areas that may not appear to be "hotspots" or represent existential threats. As will be noted in the next section laying out recommendations, in order to win popular support for smart power applications, the United States government will have to win the information war at home as well as abroad.

None of the conditions listed above are absolute harbingers of doom for smart power, in regards to violent non-state actors. However, any combination of these conditions makes success of a smart power campaign aimed at deterring and limiting VNSAs much less likely. Smart power is potentially the most powerful and effective form of power that can be utilized by a state actor but it is still limited in where it can be effectual.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the research conducted in this thesis as well as the resulting findings and analysis, I will make four recommendations that can help formulate a smart power strategy capable of deterring and limiting violent non-state actors around the world. These recommendations do not represent a complete and comprehensive smart power strategy but will present ideas and concepts towards that end.

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<sup>138</sup> Silverman, Keseah. "Capacity Building as a Tool for Comprehensive Security." NATO Allied Command Transformation. April 6, 2014. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://www.act.nato.int/article-2014-1-09>.

***Recommendation #1: Increase Foreign Aid and Development with an Overhaul to How Money is Spent***

Foreign aid and investment are major smart (and soft) power tools that can foster an environment that is far less fertile for violent non-state actor recruiting and susceptible to information operations.<sup>139</sup> However, foreign aid has to be properly targeted in order to get the most bang for the taxpayers' buck. Foreign aid unfortunately has seemingly more, or at least more publicized, failures than success stories. But there are success stories there; U.S. assistance to South Korea is probably one of the most hope inspiring. Clare Lockhart, coauthor of Fixing Failed States, summarized the U.S. - Korean foreign aid story in *World Affairs Journal* writing, "In the aftermath of the Korean War, South Korea had one of the lowest GDPs on earth, but between 1966 and 1989, it raised its GDP by an average of eight percent per year. Behind this story lies a dedicated effort to foster local capacity and industrial-led growth, backed by a US partnership. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson agreed with President Park Chung-hee of South Korea to help establish the Korea Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) and assembled a team of leading scientists and technical experts to form and plan the institute. KIST aimed to nurture Korea's own technical and managerial capacity to lay the basis for its economic transformation, rather than remain dependent on foreign management and input for its projects and companies. Korea is now one of a handful of

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<sup>139</sup> Glassman, James. "Foreign Aid: The Good And Bad." *Forbes*. April 8, 2011. Accessed August 16, 2016. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesglassman/2011/04/08/foreign-aid-the-good-and-bad/#5a2cf99311a4>.

nations that combine GDP per capita in excess of \$20,000 with a population of more than fifty million people."<sup>140</sup>

In contrast, the U.S. has poured approximately \$100 billion of nonmilitary foreign aid into Afghanistan and seen little tangible effect. The International Crisis Group noted that, "Despite billions of dollars in aid, state institutions remain fragile and unable to provide good governance, deliver basic services to the majority of the population or guarantee human security."<sup>141</sup> This is the kind of "Money Pit", as award-winning journalist Joel Brinkley characterized it, which can sabotage the potential good done by foreign aid, discourage the U.S. populace from supporting it, and prevent U.S. lawmakers and high level decision makers from pushing forward aid programs.<sup>142</sup>

Foreign aid has the potential to do more than create conditions that are difficult for violent non-state actors to succeed in. Successful foreign aid and investment stories can become a narrative about good will done by the United States that can help repair an image that has been tarnished as unilateral, imperialistic, and aggressive. This smart (and soft) power application can be parlayed into recommendations that follow this one including: information operations, capacity building, and coalition building.

Foreign aid and investment is extremely limited in what it can do if the system isn't "fixed." Throwing money at a country without purposeful planning and careful consideration does not work and may in fact be detrimental, as is evidenced by

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<sup>140</sup> Lockhart, Clare. "Fixing US Foreign Assistance: Cheaper, Smarter, Stronger." *World Affairs Journal*. January 2014. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/fixing-us-foreign-assistance-cheaper-smarter-stronger>.

<sup>141</sup> Brinkley, Joel. "Money Pit: The Monstrous Failure of US Aid to Afghanistan." *World Affairs Journal*. January 2013. Accessed August 5, 2016. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/money-pit-monstrous-failure-us-aid-afghanistan>.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

Afghanistan, Iraq, Tunisia, and scores of African nations. The U.S. government need not take on foreign aid and investment on its own. Money can be well spent in utilizing non-governmental organizations and private companies to carry out development and aid projects. That being said, the private sector is a double-edged sword. It can be more effective and agile than governmental organizations but conversely can squander money at a rapid pace such as in Haiti following the devastating earthquake there in 2010.<sup>143</sup> Conversely, private industry companies can see serious investment and growth potential in emerging markets such as Indonesia and Nepal, whom also need aid and development.

An entire thesis could be written on how to overhaul the foreign aid and investment methodology utilized by the United States and even its Western allies. In the simplest terms there needs to be long-term thinking about if aid and development are sustainable and if they build resiliency. In order to wage an effective global smart campaign to limit and deter violent non-state actors it will be incumbent upon future Presidents and Congresses to show resolve in increasing and sustaining foreign aid not slashing it based on misinformed or weary public outcry.

### ***Recommendation #2: Prioritize and Target Multilateral Capacity Building in***

#### ***Threat Areas***

Multilateral capacity building has the potential to be extremely rewarding in the long term. However, the United States, even with partners, cannot build capacity in

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<sup>143</sup> Connor, Tracy, Hannah Rappleye, and Erika Angulo. "What Does Haiti Have to Show for \$13 Billion in Earthquake Aid? - NBC News." NBC News. January 12, 2015. Accessed August 16, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/what-does-haiti-have-show-13-billion-earthquake-aid-n281661>.

every area of the world. The U.S., in its strategic planning, will need to rack and stack priorities about which areas are most important to build capacity in. These will not necessarily be the highest threat areas but rather which states are facing realistic threats but lack the security forces, military, and perhaps even governance to stand up in the face of those threats. Trying to build capacity in problem areas after problems have become out of control is reactive and can only lead to being forced to "play from behind".

Capacity building can be expensive, but the return on investment is state actors capable of deterring and limiting violent non-state actors of their own volition and with their own capabilities rather than expending ludicrous amounts of American blood and treasure down the line. The U.S. investment and capacity building in Western Europe helped prop that side of the continent up as a veritable bulwark against Soviet aggression and expansionist ideas.<sup>144</sup> The same must be done with a myriad of Asian, European, African, and South American partner states in order to counter the threat of violent non-state actors without getting involved in half a dozen conflicts concurrently with a resource-constrained and overextended all-volunteer military force.

***Recommendation #3: Develop Regional or Sub Regional, Coordinated, Enduring Information Operations Campaigns***

Information operations can shape and influence how state actors, and their actions, are perceived. In its Soviet heyday and in more recent years Russia has become extremely adept at information operations. All of Russia's actions, both overt

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<sup>144</sup> "The Marshall Plan - "The Europeans Did the Job Themselves." Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. 2015. Accessed August 24, 2016. <http://adst.org/2015/05/the-marshall-plan-the-europeans-did-the-job-themselves/>.

and covert, in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, and Syria are all integrated with its long-term, coordinated information operations campaign.<sup>145</sup> Russian actions abroad, whether belligerent and abrasive or passive and guileful, support or derive ostensible legitimacy from a consistent narrative that guides and shapes the long-term policy goals of the Russian Federation. Virtually all of Russia's foreign policy objectives are explicated in its 2015 National Security Strategy in less than veiled language.<sup>146</sup>

The United States is not Russia. But there are lessons to be learned from the former Soviet Union's employment of information operations. Russia has waged its information war against Ukraine, Crimea, most of Europe, and especially targeted nearby countries with a large percentage of Russian-language speakers. This strategy cannot be directly applied to violent non-state actors, particularly given their varying ideologies, motivations, and constructs. However, the United States can develop targeted information operations campaigns over long periods to shape the information environment to its and its allies' favors. In terms of targeting and tailoring those IO campaigns, they could potentially be divided up into regions or sub regions. Boundaries of the campaigns should not be drawn by state borders but by issues and subjects.

The U.S. has made similar attempts in the past, to "win hearts and minds" but not in the kind of proactive manner that seems necessary in today's world. In the post-9/11 world, the Bush and Obama administrations have attempted to assuage fears across

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<sup>145</sup> Monaghan, Andrew. "Putin's Way of War - The 'War' in Russia's 'Hybrid Warfare'." Strategic Studies Institute. January 2016. Accessed August 16, 2016.

[http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter\\_2015-16/9\\_Monaghan.pdf](http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2015-16/9_Monaghan.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Olikier, Olga. "Unpacking Russia's New National Security Strategy." Center for Strategic and International Studies |. January 7, 2016. Accessed August 16, 2016.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/unpacking-russias-new-national-security-strategy>.

the Islamic world about U.S. intentions of crusades against Muslims and their very way of life. But not enough has been done to shape the message of how the U.S. wants the environment of the Muslim world to integrate and mesh with America's vision, outside of the Middle Eastern democracy-obsessed Bush Doctrine. As Christian Whiton notes in his book on smart power, the United States has the option to have some say over what the information environment looks like and how the U.S. itself is perceived; none of the current analyses of how the U.S. is viewed or what its role in the world is are foregone conclusions.<sup>147</sup> The United States can and should use information operations campaigns to influence and shape populations and governments to foster environments that can more readily deter and limit violent non-state actors. Persistent information operations can potentially bring about fertile breeding grounds for anti-VNSA sentiment and more cohesion between government, populations, and the United States.

***Recommendation # 4: Create a Smart Power Joint Interagency Task Force***

The United States is fairly proficient at creating joint task forces; especially following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Whether they are effective task forces is another question entirely. The American government is especially adept at creating joint interagency task forces in war zones or in response to conflicts and crises. The Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Department of Defense, Drug Enforcement Agency, and countless other government agencies have ostensibly cooperated more on various issues over the last 15 years than in all of American history. However, outside of the National Counterterrorism Center and several Joint

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<sup>147</sup> Whiton, Christian. *Smart Power: Between Diplomacy and War*. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013. p. 90

Interagency Task Forces (JIATFs) responsible for counterdrug missions, the United States does not coordinate among agencies and apparatuses in peacetime as much as they should. The presence of a unifying force for smart power is nonexistent at this time.

As was mentioned in the information operations recommendation, the Russian Federation does an outstanding job of levying and coordinating their combat operations, information warfare, narratives, and political objectives in a manner that has had incredibly successful results over the last three years. Russia benefits greatly in its campaigning from having an authoritarian government. There can be little question that President Vladimir Putin is the linchpin and final decision maker in Russia. Hence the fact that Russian campaigns are so precise, targeted, and coordinated. Additionally, Russia is not bound to the values and responsibility of a democratic republic. There are, of course, a multitude of problems with authoritarian regimes, not the least of which is the limited freedoms of the people and a lack of openness and transparency. However, Russia figuratively has its ship sailing in one direction while the United States is metaphorically tying lifeboats together in an attempt to fight the current. The U.S. President is beholden to the American public and must work with a Congress, also beholden to the American voter, in order to pass legislation and make plans into reality. An already difficult task is made even more complex considering the party differences and turnover in public offices.

The most important recommendation from this thesis is to establish a Smart Power Joint Interagency Task Force (SPJITF). The SPJITF would not be an immediate cure to all the ails of America's smart power strategy, or lack thereof. This potential task force cannot unilaterally draft and pass legislation or allocate and raise funds on its own.



But it can bring about true coordination of efforts and guide the U.S. "ship" in one direction to achieve strategic goals through the execution of a coherent smart power strategy. The task force would need to include members from at the very least: the State Department, the Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Institute of Peace, National Security Agency, U.S. Agency for International Development, National Security Council, National Intelligence Council, National Economic Council, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, foreign investment agencies such as the African Development Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and potentially the Peace Corps.

The Smart Power Joint Interagency Task Force can provide the kind of cross-agency/organization talk and collaboration that will create a comprehensible, enduring, and effective smart power strategy that can deter and limit violent non-state actors in addition to providing deterrence and a competitive edge against near-peer challengers such as Russia and China. Having stakeholders in the task force from the aforementioned agencies and organizations brings a vested interest from multiple departments of the U.S. government. In order to procure funding and properly plan for a long-term smart power strategy, the task force should set out to establish priorities as well as near (present), mid (5-10 years), and far (10+ years) term requirements. The SPJITF would be a huge step in the right direction for adopting smart power to deal with state and violent non-state actors as well as show U.S. resolve to wield smart power.

## *Conclusion*

There is a consistent theme among my recommendations: unity. In order to effectively employ a smart power strategy that can have long lasting effects and effectively deter violent non-state actors there must be unity in effort, unity in intention, unity amongst allies, and unity within states. Clear and direct messaging and strategies cannot be produced by disparate and disjointed efforts. The status quo of Washington dysfunction won't change the paradigm through which the U.S. currently sees its role in conflict with violent non-state actors. The status quo means decades upon decades of seemingly endless war, until the United States no longer has the capital or the willpower to keep engaging violent non-state actors in asymmetric conflicts where an incredibly capable and presumably powerful U.S. military its dragged through the mud by an enemy with less might but far more flexibility and adaptability.

The asymmetric threat will not fade in the future but will persist and potentially expand with increased lethal technology exchange among state and violent non-state actors. In 1886, the novelist Rudyard Kipling's poem "Arithmetic of the Frontier" was published in the first edition of Departmental Ditties and Other Verses. A poem written 130 years ago is as prescient today as it was in the 19th Century. The most important stanza from Kipling's poem as it relates to this thesis is:

" A scrimmage in a Border Station-

A canter down some dark defile

Two thousand pounds of education

Drops to a ten-rupee jezail.

The Crammer's boast, the Squadron's pride,

Shot like a rabbit in a ride!"<sup>148</sup>

Kipling was talking about British soldiers, especially highly educated and trained officers, suffering terrible losses near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border or the "frontier." "Two thousand pounds of education drops to a ten-rupee jezail" is a discerning representation of the current and future asymmetric threat. The line is basically saying that a cheap round from a cheap gun kills these officers whom England has invested so much in. Supplant "ten-rupee jezail" with 25-cent 7.62x39mm (the round used in the AK-47) and "two thousand pounds of education" with two years of training and the poem is a description of the fights the U.S. faces today. Ironically, the United States is still embroiled in battling violent non-state actors in the very same area that Kipling was describing over a century ago.

The US must start to shift from being a reactive to pro-active power. Smart power is not a mystic, universal, cure-all Band-Aid, but it's a major step in the right direction. Smart power is not just slapping together some soft power and hard power measures and insincerely calling it a balanced approach. Smart power has to be a unified, coordinated, and carefully developed strategy but still remain flexible and resilient not only in the United States but among its partners as well. It may not have had a major track history of huge, definable victories against VNSAs but just because it hasn't been done doesn't mean it can't be done.

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<sup>148</sup> Kipling, Rudyard. "Poems - Arithmetic on the Frontier." Kipling Society. Accessed August 17, 2016. [http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems\\_arith.htm](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_arith.htm).

Earlier in the thesis it was noted that Libya had been an abject failure. There is no denying there was a number of missteps and, frankly, disasters during what was supposed to be smart power's victorious campaign. However, new developments in Libya show the central government fighting hard to take power back from Islamic State group militants. Through most of 2015, the country appeared to be on the brink of collapse and looked like a developing stronghold for the so-called Islamic State militants. By August 2016, IS militants are on the run, not giving up, but nonetheless on the run. The more recent Libya successes are a direct result of U.S. airstrikes in Libya coupled with multilateral capacity building that is increasing the Libyan government and security forces' capability to deter and limit violent non-state actors.<sup>149</sup> Can smart power prevail in Syria and Iraq? Can it instill order and peace and help to create the conditions for a stable society, perhaps a democracy? This remains to be seen. President Obama has faced harsh criticism for a proclivity not to want to employ U.S. ground forces outside of the Special Forces. However, this strategy has recently been more successful in Libya. Smart power, when employed in the careful manner this thesis outlines, can potentially provide greater resources against both state and non-state actors prone to violence in difficult security environments. The onus is on the United States political, security, and defense apparatus to give it a chance.

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<sup>149</sup> Lewis, Aidan. "Libya's Jihadist Challenge to Last beyond Sirte Defeat." Reuters. August 19, 2016. Accessed August 21, 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-idUSKCN10U19Q>.

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