



NATO
SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE



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Contents

1. DOCTRINAL PERSPECTIVES ON SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE
Giampaolo PAUCIULO pag.2
2. MILITARY CAPABILITIES FOR THE GRAY ZONE OF CONFLICT AND FUTURE LEADERSHIP
Massimo MONCADA pag.6
3. NEW APPROACH TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SFA SPECIALISTS AND IMPROVE THEIR INTERACTION WITH LOCAL SECURITY FORCES
Matteo FRANCAVILLA pag.13

Dear readers,

On behalf of all the personnel of the NATO SFA COE, which I am truly honoured and eager to serve as the new Director, it is my pleasure to present the issue n. 4/2020 Newsletter.

The COE is committed to providing a unique capability to the Alliance, NATO Nations and NATO Partners in the field of SFA through the sharing of expertise and knowledge, while cementing the varied skills required in order to accomplish the numerous tasks, missions and challenges that NATO SFA COE face as a team.



In the first article, we focus our attention on how Military Capacity Building has become an increasingly essential component of several nations' defence approach. They have developed different perspectives designed and evolved in the field of Security Force Assistance, Security Cooperation and Capacity Building, which are similar and compatible from a conceptual and structural viewpoint. Nevertheless, each nation's approach represents its national vision, which reflects its unique organizations, strategies, objectives, responsibilities and management. The article posits that the military component is only one of the means to be used for crisis prevention and stabilisation and its commitment should be underpinned by a shared political vision within cross-governmental strategies.

In the second article, we emphasize the increasing importance of the Gray Zone, which encompasses the specific part of the spectrum of political conflict that separates competition according to traditional politics (white) from all-out war (black). In this context, where Western troops are increasingly working by, with and through local and regional Allies in important areas for global security, the role of Security Force Assistance must take on a paramount role. Given the need to understand the impact of the future operating environment, it is essential that nations currently begin to prepare their "future leaders" to resolve the complexities of future unknown environments through a new non-conventional thinking approach which places an ever-greater trust in the combination of men and machines, integrating the potential of the latter incrementally.

In the third article we took into consideration the paramount importance that the Alliance assigns to the human dimension in its continuous innovation process, including by focusing on personnel enhancement efforts. We described our attempt to utilise a new approach to maximize the effectiveness of the SFA specialists' profile and improve their interaction with Local Forces.

May this newsletter be the first of a long list of reading capable of engaging the interest of the SFA Community of Interest and beyond, so as to become an inspiration for further thinking and research.



The recent trends aimed at developing capability and capacity of local forces and increasing a partner nation's ability to achieve self-sufficiency have led to the development and the update of the main armed forces doctrine on Defence Capacity Building (DCB) and Security Force Assistance (SFA) activities. This has resulted in light-footprint military interventions, instead of massive boots on the ground deployments.

The twenty-first century has seen a decrease in the exclusive use of force to achieve military end-states in support of policy objectives¹. The focus has shifted from large-scale military interventions towards conflict prevention, hence emphasizing local sustainable solutions. It has also seen an increase in bolstering fledgling democratic states through financial, security and diplomatic aids. The NATO Strategic Concept adopted during the Summit in Lisbon in 2010 stressed the importance and obligation of NATO to prevent crises, manage conflicts and stabilize post conflict situations. This can be achieved by cooperating closer with international partners, the United Nations and especially with the European Union, through the exchange of information, additional consultations and a stronger dialogue. The need also emerged to “Develop the capability to train and develop local forces in crisis zones, so that the local authorities are able, as quickly as possible, to secure

and maintain security without international assistance”². The overall conceptual solution in this kind of scenario is essentially based on a “shape-secure-develop” strategy³ and it includes both kinetic and non-kinetic actions in relation to their effects. This strategy is applied in order to support the state's institutions and to enable local forces to face up to internal and external threats. This strengthens their capacity to conduct operations utilising a comprehensive approach, including the cognitive battlefield. Military capacity building has become an increasingly essential component of several nations' defence approach. Moreover, the effort to build non self-sufficient security forces is becoming ever more a key principle of their security strategy. In fact, conducting operations by, with and through local security forces⁴ is considered an essential part of preventing and deterring threats in the current operating environment.

1 Why SFA fail. U.S. Government, U.S. Military, Department of Defense, U.S. Army, Courtney Dean. 2016.

2 Lisbon Summit Declaration – 2010.

3 The 'SSD' framework is an operational-level framework, which provides a template for coherent over-watch of the operations area. AJP 3.4.4 – Allied Joint Publication for Counter-Insurgency.

4 Oxford Research Group, Remote Warfare. Lessons learned from contemporary theatres, 2018.

In view of the importance of Capacity Building, NATO created the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative. This initiative was designed to improve partners' defence and related security capacities, as well as their resilience, therefore contributing to the security of the Alliance⁵.

In an instable situation, the capacity to address the existing challenges of local forces, represents an essential factor for governments and institutions. In this perspective, the Security Force Assistance approach constitutes a tool to build the capacity of foreign partners to combat security threats with a minimal involvement of the military component. The foregoing considerations highlight the fact that SFA activities, and in general capacity building efforts, cannot be merely considered in a short-term perspective. The effects of some activities such as training, advising and enabling local forces could be achieved in the short-medium term.

However, the real and critical SFA outcomes, involving the capacity and capability to maintain the state's stability and security in a self-sufficient way, will be reached with long term commitment by all actors. The different perspectives⁶ designed and evolved in the field of Security Force Assistance, Security Cooperation and Capacity Building are similar and compatible for conceptual and



Figure 1. Modern Brigade Course performed in Iraq. www.difesa.it

structural aspects (in terms of policies, capabilities, concepts, training and lessons learned). But, nevertheless, they represent their national visions, which reflect different organizations, strategies, objectives, responsibilities and management.

From the examined documents, the importance has emerged for a combination of diplomatic, economic and military engagements that work together with conducting Security Force Assistance activities, both in a Stabilization and Reconstruction (S&R) strategy and in a crisis prevention effort.

Essentially, a comprehensive approach is required where the military component cannot and should not do it all but needs the involvement of civilian institution building, economic development and diplomatic negotiations. Thus, the military component is only one of the means to be used and its commitment

5 It can include various types of support, ranging from strategic advice on defence and security sector reform and institution-building, to development of local forces through education and training, or advice and assistance in specialised areas such as logistics or cyber defence.

6 USA: Joint Publication 3-20 Security Cooperation, 2017; Security Force Assistance Planner's Guide – Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, 2016.

UK: Army Field Manual Tactics for Stability Operations - Part 5: Military Support to Capacity Building, 2018; Tactical Doctrine Note 17/04, Security Force Assistance.

GERMANY: Preliminary Principle for the Role of Land Forces in Supporting Foreign Security Forces, 2012.

FRENCH: DFT 3.4.5.1 AMO ANG – Contribution of Land Forces to Security Force Assistance, 2015.

ITALY: PID/O 3.16 - La Dottrina Interforze sulla Security Force Assistance, 2020; PSE 3.04.01- L'Assistenza alle Forze di Sicurezza (SFA), 2016.

should be underpinned by a shared political vision within cross-government strategies.

In order to achieve the overarching aim of SFA activities⁷, it is critical that the military instrument is strongly supported by other national instruments of power headed by the political leadership. When conducting activities focused on increasing capacity and capability of a partner nation's security sector and their related institutions, lessons learned highlighted the importance to consider not only the key factors of time and relationships. Other factors to consider include the commonality of interests between parties involved and the implications, in the short and long term, that the outcomes of these operations can have on national, regional and global balance. These are consequences that policy-makers, as well as the military instrument, should be able to predict. They must also assess the kind and the extent of the support to be provided, whilst planning a clear and effective transition phase. All these considerations related to the complexity of such operations, in which several complex variables should be considered, from tactical to strategic-political, show how these efforts involve potential risks, pitfalls and problems. One major impediment, for example, is strictly tied to the difficulty of assessing a likely intricate global context and integrating a capacity building strategy in established or sensitive national and regional balances. There is a risk of aggravating or spreading conflict dynamics by building the "wrong" capacity or



Figure 2. Airborne training in favour of Nigerian paratroopers.www.difesa.it

strengthening the "wrong" actors. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that Security Force Assistance commitment promotes human rights, the rule of law and sensibility. This can be achieved by guaranteeing their respect among local forces and related Institutions through training, advising and mentoring activities⁸. Another significant problem can be traced back to the need for a holistic approach in carrying out such operations and activities where internal and external actors, donors, IOs and NGOs are involved and where an effective fusion and coordination are pivotal to ensure success.

Capacity Building, to be effective, mitigate risks and avoid pitfalls, should not be just seen as a modern way to conduct operations, used just to avoid costly military interventions and to reduce political and military risks by shifting responsibility to local actors. Limiting force deployments and letting the Local Forces have an active role should be viewed as the main objective in Security

⁷ Basically, it could be summarized from all the doctrines as developing legitimate local forces and institutions while contributing to regional stability making them competent, committed, confident, accountable and capable and sustainable.

⁸ AJP 3.16 - Allied Joint Publication for Security Force Assistance, 2016.

Force Assistance operations. One should also consider the articulated framework in which these kinds of operations are planned and conducted.

A complex environment characterized by imperatives, principles, long-term planning considerations, political commitments and geopolitical considerations should not reduce such operations to only extemporaneous training or advising activities per se.

The above considerations share common ideas derived from experience and subsequent analysis, that are fundamental and critical for approaching Security Force Assistance. The main focus should be on understanding the operational environment, focusing on political, social and organizational cultures of the assisted nation and on regional players and transnational actors who may influence it.

Other common views for approaching SFA are to strengthen the assisted nation's government legitimacy in the eyes of its population and international community while considering legal, cultural, historical, religious, social, gender, moral and political aspects. Also, it is essential to foster awareness of reform efforts, through transparent and accountable SFA activities, promoting rule of law, including applicable human rights laws and gender perspective⁹. Another fundamental step is to support an assisted nation's commitment, built upon personal relationships and mutual trust, underpinned by strong leadership, in order to make the SFA effects sustainable in the long term.



Figure 3. Advising activity in RS Mission. www.difesaonline.it

In conclusion, Capacity Building as a strategy is appealing, both to providers and recipients. It sits well with the local ownership paradigm and it could potentially save both lives and money by reducing the pressure for external military forces and facilitating light footprints by international actors¹⁰.

This commitment will have a predominant role in future military operations for several reasons, such as the rationale of burden-sharing in addressing common threats, the minimal costs in “blood and treasure” and the possibility to guarantee a low-visibility presence in sensitive and high-risks areas. This will consequently enable the expansion of a sphere of influence at an affordable price, and above all contribute to reduce instability or avert crises in areas of interest while at the same time ensuring a minimal involvement of forces from the perspective of the kinetic violence on the battlefield.

⁹ <https://www.nsfacoe.org/nato-sfa-coe-legal-roundtable-on-rule-of-law-for-sfa-activities-in-crisis-zones/>

¹⁰ Arming the Peace. The Sensitive Business of Capacity Building. Claes Nilsson, Kristina Zetterlund, 2011.



Nowadays, innovation is no longer driven, as it once was, by military research but it is usually driven by the civil sector, which is characterized by the speed and pervasiveness of digital technologies, by the change in business models, by demographic and geopolitical changes and a shift in the centre of innovation increasingly towards the East in favour of the Asian powers. With this ever-expanding complexity, beyond normal human capabilities, models are needed to anticipate change by promoting both the study and application of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT) and a cultural change (mindset) of organizations. It is necessary to expand the collaboration between different and varied professionals with different sensitivities and competences in the civil and military world with a view to fostering open innovation¹¹.

During the new pandemic era, as Covid-19 has imposed a change of pace, digitization represents a challenge in cultural, organizational and relational terms, rather than just technological.

NATO, as a political and military organi-

zation and its member countries have understood the importance of discussing and developing the aforementioned topics. In fact, in 2019 international and national workshops were held on innovation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data in Leader Development and Decision Making.

NATO ACT organised several workshops focused on innovation and the impact of new emerging technologies in the Alliance's transformations, such as the International Concept Development and Experimentation (ICDE) Conference held in Madrid in October 2019, aimed at promoting a collaborative approach to concept and capability development¹². Moreover, ACT arranged the NATO Industry Forum (NIF)¹³ with the aim of exploiting emerging and disruptive

11 Italian Defence General Staff, Defence Innovation Centre, workshop report on "Human Autonomy Teaming", December 2019.

12 For more.. https://www.act.nato.int/articles/nato-sponsors-international-dialogue-on-cde?fbclid=IwAR2I0CNXQg4Jvyf-P46JyzOoXfmZ_3plc9Fdq6Y-WY9AdTRzNwmeFx1FhyU

13 <https://www.act.nato.int/industryforum>

technologies for future adaptations of the Alliance to further strengthen its deterrence and defence. The third event was the Chiefs of Transformation Conference (COTC), which sought to interconnect national transformation initiatives with those of transforming allied commands, in particular in the areas of innovation, longer-term capacity development and training¹⁴.

Following this trail of innovation conferences, the Italian Defence General Staff, Defence Innovation Centre, brought together in December 2019 around 100 qualified representatives from the military, academic (Research, University and Think Tank) and industrial worlds (Small and Medium Enterprises and Technological Poles), to share ideas, explore opportunities and identify medium-long term challenges in the Human-Machine collaboration (Human Autonomous Teaming – HAT Workshop)¹⁵. Among the many topics discussed in these events, some of them are in the focus area of the NATO SFA COE's Program of Work (PoW) as "Military Capabilities for the Gray Zone of Conflict", "Future Leadership" and "Human capital". Therefore, in these fora, NATO SFA COE contributed to the open discussion providing ideas and concepts gained through the experience in the Security Force Assistance (SFA) environment.

Nowadays, the activity in the Gray Zone is increasing. The Gray Zone is the specific part of the spectrum of political conflict that separates competition

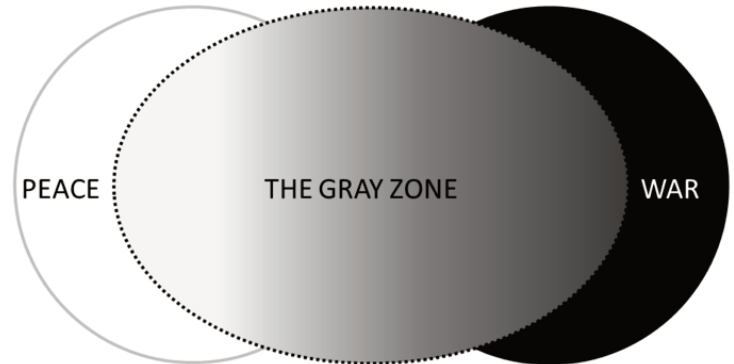


Figure 4. www.realcleardefense.com

according to traditional politics (white) from all-out war (black). As some analysts from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) argue, the future wars will be marked by the "three non-warfare" that will embrace legal, psychological, and information activities short of war: non-contact, non-linear, and non-symmetric¹⁶. This debate focuses on narrowing the field and the boundaries of the Gray Zone of conflicts by defining as clearly as possible its scope and contexts.

¹⁴ <https://www.act.nato.int/cotc>

¹⁵ https://www.difesa.it/SMD_/Staff/Reparti/III/CID/Pagine/InnovaDifesa.aspx

¹⁶ Frank G. Hoffman, *Examining Complex Forms of Conflict. Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges*.

Moreover, it stresses that, even if the military instrument is not the major tool of national power to conduct operations short of military conflicts, the role of the armed forces continues to be relevant in prevention, detection, deterrence and response. According to Michael Mazzar, compared to the past, there are at least three innovations in the Gray Zone phenomenon.

First, an increasing number of aggressive nations mainly China, Russia, and Iran are making extensive use of Gray Zone strategies.

Second, the cost of significant aggression has grown enormously and the economic and social interdependence of the world has grown so much that countries with aggressive intent are looking for alternative ways to achieve their goals.

Finally, while some tools of Gray Zone warfare have been used since antiquity, others are relatively new phenomena (e.g., cyber warfare, advanced forms of information warfare, and the processing and refinement of civilian tools for policy and strategic purposes)¹⁷. In this context, where Western troops are increasingly working by, with and through local and regional Allies in important areas for global security, the role of Security Force Assistance could take on a paramount role.



Figure 5. NATO SFA COE SMEs involved in Market place activity during the NATO ACT ICDE Conference in Madrid, Spain (October 2019). Source: NATO SFA COE.

Security Force Assistance would operate in conjunction with Intelligence, Special Operations and cyber operations, in order to foster regional and national stabilization and permit local authorities to provide their own security without a resort to international assistance or with a minimum footprint from NATO, as described in the Lisbon summit Declaration of 2010. It is important to highlight the importance of SFA activities in the current operational environments and how they could be focused in addressing threats in the so-called Gray Zone of conflict, with the application of related principles, imperatives, framework and planning considerations.

¹⁷ Michael Mazzar, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, December 2015)

Many roundtables exploring the subject have identified the need to develop a document that could clearly define the Gray Zone. Its definition remains both expansive and elusive, and, therefore, it would be helpful to both clarify the definition and outline agreed standard responses for the nations to be paired with established rules of engagement¹⁸.



Figure 6. NATO ACT ICDE Conference in Madrid, Spain. www.act.nato.int/cde-conf

Future Leadership

Given the need to understand the impact of the future operating environment on leadership capability and to determine how to better prepare and support future leaders, many workshops were dedicated to “Future Leadership” (FUT-LEAD), focused on how organisations can educate, train and sustain their future leaders in the future operating environment, characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA).

This environment will be complex, unpredictable and multi-domain, almost chaotic. It will be necessary to deal with a wider range of problems more rapidly, given that the increasingly massive use of computer systems and algorithms reduces the time for decision-making. The problem-solving has to take place in a riverbed of conflict and non-conflict, with a capacity to manage a wider diversity of people and even (autonomous) machines.

conflict and non-conflict, with a capacity to manage a wider diversity of people and even (autonomous) machines.

AI and Big Data

Another related important topic is the growing development and exploitation of Artificial Intelligence (AI), human augmentation (that aims to enhance human abilities through medicine or technology) and other technological advancements, which represent several challenges and opportunities for leaders, and also for SFA specialists (SFA Advisors, Mentors, Trainers, etc.).

The use of an Artificial Intelligence as interpreter during Key Leader Engagements (KLEs), in the decision-making process or using human augmentation tools, such as an exoskeleton, can have implications on military operations in

¹⁸ <https://www.act.nato.int/cde-conf>

21st Century challenges for military

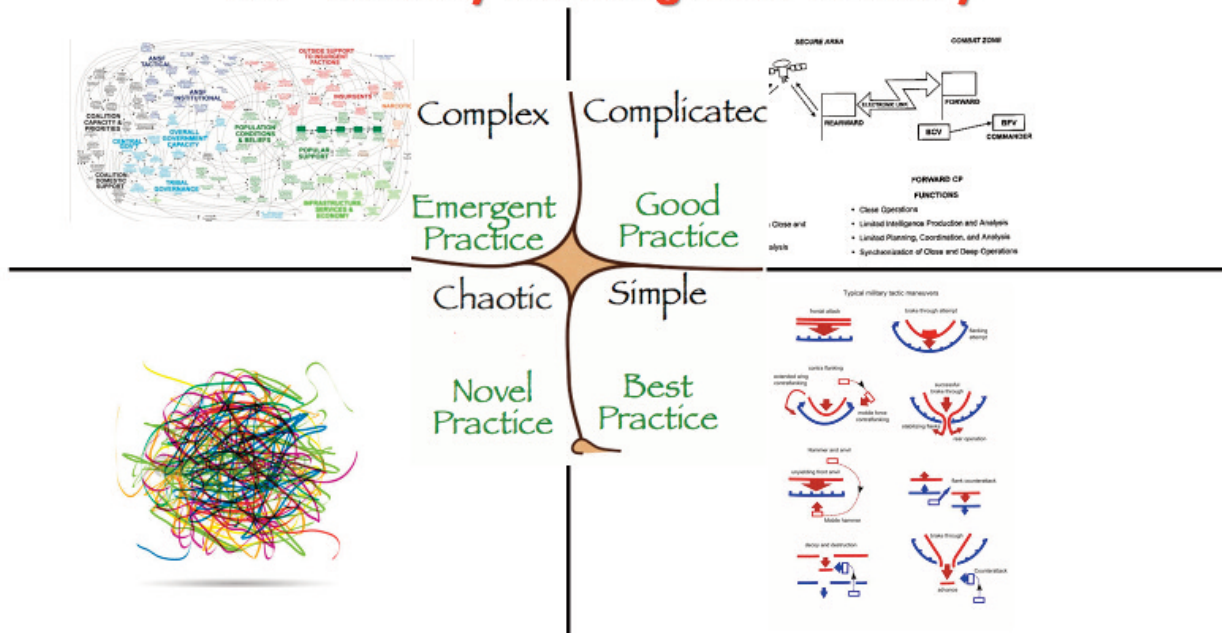


Figure 7. Slide made in occasion of ICDE Conference in Madrid, Spain, October 2019

terms of planning, effectiveness, effort extension and energy saving. Therefore, the use of AI and new technological instruments should be promoted in planning and conducting SFA activities in the aforementioned complex environment. In this field there are different tools created to support and strengthen such efforts.

For example, by using these tools it is possible to have a specifically designated game, which can allow actors to develop SFA strategies even with resource constraints. Based on how effective these strategies turn out in the game context, it will be possible to achieve broader operational and strategic goals. In view of the fact that the game has to replicate the typical “non-linear system” of the SFA environment (characterized by social, cultural, anthropo-

logical aspects, etc.), all these tools can help to realize unpredictable outcomes and should illustrate common patterns of behaviour based on historical SFA outcomes elaborated with Big Data and AI. The use of autonomous systems,



Figure 8. Image from workshop report on “Human Autonomy Teaming”, ITA Defence General Staff, December 2019.

through AI and Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL) techniques based on artificial neural networks, progressively increase the cognitive process of machines by independently modifying their "intellectual" abilities.

Considering the chaotic environment and massive use of AI, Big Data etc., what kind of emerging skills are necessary for future leaders?

Skills for future leadership

As a consequence of the aforementioned characteristics of the modern operating environment as a non-linear system, the future leaders need to manage it through a new non-conventional thinking approach. This approach is characterised by a combination of soft skills (such as system thinking, building using connection, social skills, self-awareness, change management, tolerance to ambiguity, unlearning and relearning) and technological skills.

So, it is important to emphasize "that it is essential that nowadays leaders are prepared to develop future leaders responsible to resolve complexities of future unknown environments"¹⁹.

Among the skills to be stressed in the training and educating process of future ruling classes are: an ability to fully understand and cope with digital transformation (Digital Mindset), an all-inclusive/overall



Figure 9. NATO SFA COE member during the ICDE Conference in Madrid. www.act.nato.int/cde-conf

vision of the problems and challenges in their entirety (System Thinking) and the capacity to manage the complexity of change (Change & Complexity Management). The leaders of the future will have to further promote the Whole of Government Approach by enhancing transversal knowledge and skills (Building Connection), by learning from sudden changes and possible failures / errors and by enhancing the qualities of Tolerance Ambiguity, Unlearning & Relearning²⁰.

All these complexities are the normal challenges faced by SFA specialists, because they routinely operate in a non-linear system, characterized by unpredictable outcomes, which requires an open and adaptive mind-set and a systemic approach to problem-solving.

¹⁹ ICDE 2019 International Concept Development & Experimentation Conference synopsis, NATO ACT, November 2019.

²⁰ As discussed during the workshop "Human Autonomy Teaming, "The Man-Machine combination in future decision-making, organizational and training processes", Italian Defence General Staff, Rome December 2019. Il binomio Uomo-Macchina nei futuri processi decisionali, organizzativi e formativi; Report, Italian Defence General Staff, 2019.

The Human Capital is the most relevant “tool” to conduct SFA activities and foster an effective development of Local Forces capabilities.

For this reason, ensuring a continuous and punctual support to the NATO Human Capital concept, the NATO SFA COE is supporting an MCDC²¹ project: the Interoperable Multinational Resident Advisor Capability project, (IMRAC). This project is co-led by USA and Italy with the aim to develop a Senior advisor curriculum to be taught in the US, partner, and allied schools.

MCDC emphasizes that currently multinational and coalition missions are resourced with personnel who (in most cases) lack specialized training to advise at the Executive/Ministerial level of a host nation’s security institution. This requires an appropriate and standardized training and education of international senior advisors and an improved selection and talent management processes. In summary, an analysis of current trends reveals the need to invest in Human Capital by supporting a cycle of training and continuous learning (Life Long Culture Of Learning) aimed at creating a new mind-set on the subject of innovation and promoting a broad-spectrum digital education on basic AI knowledge elements.

It will also be critical to orient the professional growth of Leadership towards organizational and decision-making models that place an ever-greater trust



Figure 10. Development of Human Capital by NATO SFA COE. Source: NATO SFA COE.

in the combination of men and machines, integrating the potential of the machine incrementally.

The military use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be considered the latest revolution in the military field, and the cyber space has been recognized as the fifth domain of war, along with land, sea, air and space²².

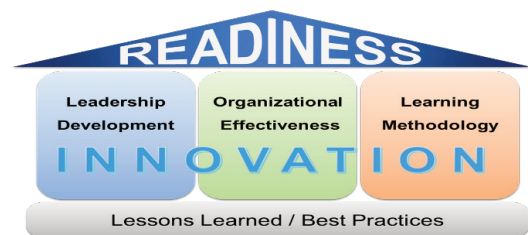


Figure 11. Human Capital Development for NATO ACT

Conceptual, legal and ethical aspects have to be analysed to ensure a fair and effective legal framework, which will contribute to shaping a peaceful information society²³.

21 www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/opex/2019_MCDC_FUTLEAD.pdf. The Multinational Capability Development Campaign (MCDC) series is an initiative led by the United States designed to collaboratively develop and assess concepts and capabilities to address the challenges associated with conducting joint, multinational and coalition operations.

22 <https://ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/2013ethics-workshop-proceedings.pdf>

23 See: <https://ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/springer-Abstract.pdf>

New approach to maximize the effectiveness of the SFA specialists and improve their interaction with Local Forces. We should drop the “train and equip” mentality. Raising armies is more sophisticated than this, ... Training and equipping alone only gives you better dressed soldiers who shoot straighter...

Sean McFate

NATO's operational environment is evolving and the potential threats are changing. The traditional factors that the Alliance may have historically considered as the basis for its military capability development are becoming increasingly less relevant, but in any case, the human factor remains NATO's most valuable resource. The Alliance seeks to look beyond the traditional standpoint of human resource management and explore all aspects of Human Capital²⁴ optimization across the organization. The Alliance clearly framed the paramount importance of the human dimension in its continuous innovation process, focusing on personnel enhancement efforts. The providers and the Local Forces organization.

With that in mind, NATO SFA COE has been developing a project aimed towards the identification of key SFA



Figure 3. Advising activity in RS Mission.
www.difesaonline.it

competences²⁵. It has sought to learn from the experiences of the military and civilian personnel deployed worldwide as Advisors, Mentors and Trainers who worked alongside Local Forces, by ask-

²⁴ http://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/threeswords/HumanCapitalEnhancement_2019ThreeSwords.pdf

²⁵ 1st NATO SFA COE Lessons Learned Workshop Report.

ing them to identify all the fundamental aspects of their job and foreign experiences.

By gathering information about the experiences of such personnel and collating them into a comprehensive report, it has been possible to consider the reality of the interactions between different approaches and mind-sets, with the common aim of improving the success rate of future SFA missions and thereby fostering the Host Nation's stability.

Our analysis of the various experiences revealed some new challenging issues:

Differences between advisors mentors and trainers.

The Allied Joint Publication 3.16 clearly sets out the differences between advising, mentoring and training.

Advising is an activity conducted, to



Figure 13. Resolute Support advisers attend country adviser training in RS HQ Kabul. www.dvidshub.net



Figure 14. SFA Operators Course attendees during a working group session. Source: NATO SFA COE.

provide a specific expertise, in the military and/or civilian field, to develop a sector of the counterpart's organization²⁶.

Mentoring provides support to the local establishment, focusing on their leadership's development, working in close relations and inspiring them by example²⁷. Training is typically the most visible and recognized SFA activity. The aim of training and education is to teach a person (or organization) a skill, or type of behavior, through regular practice and instruction²⁸.

The core of the aforementioned activities is the human factor. Trainers Mentors and Advisors will interact with their "human" counterpart, creating relations and exchanging information in order to achieve the same end state.

Could the human factor be strictly framed in this categorization? Might these doctrinal differences be so thin in the implementation phase?

26 AJP 3.16 on Security Force Assistance (SFA), 2016.

27 ibidem.

28 ibidem.

It is a key open issue, which will deeply characterize the figure of the SFA specialist. The definitions of the Advisors, Mentors and Trainers will be reviewed and integrated in light of data analysis, pointing out the psychological factors and technical competences. There are realistic clues, which allow a glimpse at considerable overlapping areas, with a consequent thinning of the doctrinal boundaries between these three figures.

Selection and training process for the SFA specialist.

Starting from the human factor as the core of the SFA specialist, the approach of NATO SFA COE research is to assist nations and NATO to enhance the select-



Figure 15. SFA activity in RS Mission. www.dailysalar.com

ing and training process, providing a profile adherent to the current and future operational requirements. The first phase is gathering the SFA specialist's experiences to point out useful recommendations in order to project a common reference model to be adopted by NATO for training purposes.

Cultural understanding, cultural awareness and cultural adaptability: essential areas of focus for those who work alongside Local Forces.

It is difficult to establish the most crucial competences of the SFA specialist in relating with Local Forces. Nevertheless, it is clear that cultural understanding, cultural awareness, and cultural adaptability are closely linked, almost as if they were three aspects of the same skill: to adapt one must be aware and to be aware one must first understand. One might assume that, in the era of globalization, cultural differences have almost completely disappeared and that the patterns of our culture are now widely accepted and shared. However, a more careful analysis reveals that what we share globally are often the most superficial aspects of globalization. On the contrary, the elements that remain deeply rooted in the consciousness and life of each individual are those that the famous essayist Samuel Huntington defines in his "Clash of Civiliza-

tions" as "the basic beliefs, values, attitudes, orientations, assumptions, religion, and language of a particular group of people". These are precisely the elements which the SFA specialist must be deeply aware of and it is thanks to this awareness that the SFA specialist becomes an open-minded professional, able to understand the differences and similarities with their foreign counterparts in order to better interact with them ²⁹. The achievement of a professional figure of such a high level is only possible thanks to a continuous multidisciplinary training that allows the SFA specialist, who is already trained in military matters, to analyze, evaluate and finally approach their counterparts in the most suitable way.

Empathy is not enough

The ability to understand others' feelings and needs (empathy) is certainly an integral part of the SFA specialist's behavior for the creation of a positive relationship with the foreign counterpart, but is that enough?

The human factor plays a focal role in the SFA domain, but actually how much are the adaptability, communication attitude and creativity worth?

much are the adaptability, communication attitude and creativity worth?



Figure 16. www.poadu.wordpress.com

As emerged from our multiple interviews, the adaptability skill (the ability to understand environmental changes, modifying one's behavior in order to achieve a designated objective), the communication skill (mainly based on assertiveness) and the problem solving capability each contribute decisively to define the SFA specialist's effectiveness.

These are some of the challenges which are leading the NATO SFA COE study, stimulating the stakeholders' debate and emphasizing the importance of investing in Human Capital. The SFA specialist profile is a new approach to set up a tailored selection and formation process aimed at improving its skills and enhancing the proactive interaction with Local Forces.

²⁹ See: www.nsfacoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/REPORT-SFA-Workshop.pdf



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