

The aim of this section is to present the most important human and non-kinetic aspects which should be taken into account when developing a NATO SFA concept.

1. As stated earlier SFA is a very complex relationship. In order to be successful, any security actor involved in SFA should consider a number of human factors when planning, preparing and contributing to this comprehensive effort.
2. A clear NATO description of Security Force Assistance (SFA) does not exist yet. However, many existing descriptions agree upon the fact that, in SFA missions, the human aspects are key. Indeed, even if the success of SFA eventually concretizes in the ability of foreign forces to conduct kinetic actions, the most important assets assisted forces need to be provided with are knowledge, skills and the appropriate mindset. Besides the foreign forces ability, their legitimacy among the local population is another key condition to success. These two issues, among many others, make success of the SFA mission highly dependent on the careful addressing of human and non-kinetic¹ aspects.

MINDSET

3. It will never be too much emphasized that successful SFA requires a specific mindset. This mindset focuses on working by, with, and through the assisted foreign security forces to support the host nation's internal security and development. It is accepted that, while some actions or decisions may be sub-optimal from a NATO military perspective, when they do have host nation ownership, they are more likely to be enduring. Concretely this means that the assisted foreign forces, at any time, are making all the decisions and taking all the responsibility for their organization, preparation, plans and operations. This is the only way to create viable and autonomous security forces able to sustain their performance long after NATO forces have left.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT UNDERSTANDING

4. In many situations, developing foreign capabilities mirroring NATO capabilities may not be appropriate to address the local situation. To assist successful 'foreign capability development', the NATO forces must get thorough understanding of the local security challenges, and of the human environment² in

¹ For this paper, the non-kinetic aspects are defined as those aspects related to human perception and behavior and the ways and tools to influence them.

² The human environment is composed of all the people within the area of responsibility and immaterial components of their individual and collective life (culture, social and political organization, religion, ...).

which and from which they arise. Then, together with the local forces, the security forces structure and response to best meet these challenges are identified.

5. The most important factor that needs to be understood about the local human environment is its culture. For example, a solution perfectly meeting a local security issue could never be successfully implemented unless it is made relevant through local culture. Culture can be compared to a filter altering the communication. Who does not speak according to the cultural codes will never be understood. This, in turn, would give the perception that NATO forces are not serving the interests of the communities they are intending to help. On the other hand, who does not understand the local culture will never be able to decode local messages and understand the situation. As recently stressed by one NATO nation's government "*we reject the false choice between our security and our ideals. We can and we must and we will protect both*"; it is important to associate this statement to SFA; and make sure NATO does not question whatsoever, consciously or not, the host nation ideals and culture.

6. For the reasons afore mentioned, and in addition to understand the local population, it is also important to understand and to be understood by the members of the assisted foreign forces. The level of mutual understanding is directly linked to the amount of time spent in close contact with the local forces. From the outset it needs to be assumed that this will take a long time.

7. Legitimacy is a component of the foreign forces capabilities to be developed. To be effective on the long term, the population needs to perceive their security forces as legitimate. The NATO assisting forces action as well need to be perceived as legitimate by the local population and by the members of the assisted forces. Each member of the NATO assisting forces needs to act as to achieve and strengthen legitimacy. Besides individual attitude of NATO staff, the legitimacy of the NATO Assisting Force and of the foreign forces need to be supported by coherent PSYOPS strategy and capabilities.

8. The understanding of the human environment can't be improvised. Without pre-deployment training in understanding the human environment, a NATO unit would waste most of its time in answering the basic questions about the local situation. Before the SFA mission starts, a Knowledge Base (KB) of everything known about the local human environment should be built. On one side it constitutes the pool of information to draw upon and disseminate among the assistance force through pre-deployment training. On the other side it is a living body of knowledge which needs to increase, update and improve continuously. The KB sources are either direct or indirect knowledge. Direct knowledge is acquired by direct interaction with the people. This method of acquiring knowledge is the most efficient since it allows assessing the perception process by observing how people react to one action or message. Indirect knowledge is acquired by listening to or reading from someone who had the direct interaction. Indirect knowledge is also acquired by observing not the people but their environment and then deriving knowledge about the people. To remain relevant, Indirect Knowledge should always be verified and adapted by personnel with up-to-date direct experience so it fits the time and the area where the SFA unit will be operating. Obviously, what is valid in one area today is not valid in another one next month. The updating and improving of the KB needs to be formalized in a permanent process which also insures information is passed between rotating units.

INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES (ATTITUDE, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS)

9. Previous paragraphs already emphasized the need for mutual understanding between the NATO forces and the assisted foreign forces. Understanding, though, is not enough to achieve success in SFA. It is trust that needs to be built between NATO and foreign forces. And this must be developed through a sustained proximity at individual level including working, but also eating and relaxing with local forces members. Sharing risks is an extremely valuable attitude while building trust; as well as learning the local language.

10. Conducting SFA requires interacting skills above average. The mission of a SFA unit imply interacting with local people on a regular basis, which makes most of its personnel fall under the “interacting personnel” category described by the NATO COIN TF Mission Specific Training Guidance (Reference D). As a consequence, they should be trained according to it. The training should comprise:

- The ability to analyse and evaluate how facts and messages are perceived by both local and Self cultures.
- The ability to identify the cultural biases which make people from different background perceive the same fact in a different way.
- High level communication and language skills and the efficient use of interpreters.

11. An example of training needs can be found in Annex C.

12. Not everyone is a good trainer, advisor or mentor. Only those who master their specialty together with training and mentoring skills and techniques are proficient in these tasks. Training, advising and mentoring forces from another culture require even more talents and efforts and should not be tasked to the average military.

13. The specificities of the local situation, culture and language probably require the development of training techniques and tools tailored to the local audience. The use of interpreter is one of them. The creation of courseware in the local language, or for illiterate students, is other examples. Adaptability and creativity definitely make part of the SFA skill set.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSISTANCE FORCES

14. The crucial need for the NATO SFA unit to adapt to the specificity of the local situation and, whenever applicable, to its target foreign unit, will probably create significant differences between how the various SFA units conduct their mission. This justifies a high level of decentralization. SFA units must be empowered to choose the best ways to achieve their goals. The progress of the mission will probably not fit a predefined timeline; so the setting of calendar milestones should be avoided as much as possible. Also the rotation pattern of a NATO Assisting Unit should mirror the one of the foreign unit it assists.

15. Given the specificity of the tasks, even after a thorough training, many SFA activities might require expert support; in the field of culture and language for example. The acquisition of this expert support should not be improvised; and should

not rely only on locally hired personnel either. Understanding local people and building trust imply an individual commitment and interpersonal proximity. In a first stage, using third persons from outside the NATO force, such as locally contracted interpreters, facilitates the interactions. However, if NATO is depending on third persons to have any contact, the *social proximity*³ between NATO personnel and the members of assisted forces remains limited. While the outsourcing of local expertise is necessary, the NATO Force needs also to develop an in house ability to interact with the members of the local forces without external support. This means longer deployment tours for NATO personnel, where preferably the same SFA actor (unit/person) deploys time and again in the same province. In this way he can cultivate the bonds he has forged in time, and reap their harvest.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

16. Traditionally, the Special Operations Forces are the only one trained, organized and prepared by default to conduct SFA missions. It is usually when an SFA mission is too big for the SFO capabilities that it is tasked to General Purpose Forces (GPF), which, traditionally, are not initially trained and prepared for it. As a consequence, much of the SFA know-how resides within NATO SOF. At the moment, NATO SOF HQ is conducting a review of NATO nations' Military Assistance (MA⁴) Doctrines. It would be sound to coordinate the work on SFA with the work on MA.

17. An additional question which might be addressed together with NATO SOF HQ is how this very specific know-how could pass from the SOF to the GPF.

18. Finally, success in Security Force Assistance requires to properly addressing its human aspects. This entails a significant and lengthy preparation, specific techniques, skills and, most of all, a specific mindset. This can't be improvised. A NATO agreed document on SFA should make this clear.

³ The *social proximity* is the degree of mutual acceptance between people from different social groups.

⁴ Military Assistance conducted by Special Operations Forces is significantly similar to the Security Force Assistance conducted by general purpose forces.