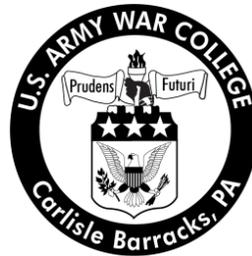# Strategy Research Project

Expanding Influence: How Village Stability Operations Can Further U.S. Interests

by

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Abstract

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As America winds down combat operations in Afghanistan and the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific occurs what else is going to draw the energies and attentions of America and DoD in the coming years? I submit that the greatest threat to America's interests in the future will not be traditional nation state aggressors, but rather the growth in the number of weak, failing or failed states. How and why do countries regardless of their form of government collapse into chaos which breeds lawlessness, violence and regional instability and what can America do to counter these events and safeguard our interests? This paper proposes that Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) and the interagency partners (IA) should consider using Village Stability Operations (VSO) as both a WAY and a MEANS that is cost efficient and has a small footprint to promote regional stability goals (ENDs).

Expanding Influence: How Village Stability Operations Can Further U.S. Interests

As America winds down combat operations in Afghanistan and rebalances to the Asia-Pacific, what else will draw the energies and attentions of America and DoD in the coming years?[1] Will it be the continued threat of Iran seeking a nuclear weapon or the rise of China's power? Though critically important, the greatest threat to America's interests in the future will not be traditional nation state aggressors, but rather the growth in the number of weak, failing or failed states. In the book, *Fixing Failed States*, "forty to sixty states, home to nearly two billion people, are either sliding backward or teetering on the brink of implosion or have already collapsed."[2] Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates echoed this when he stated, "I believe the most persistent and potentially dangerous threats will not come from ambitious states, but rather from failing ones that cannot meet the basic needs- much less the aspirations of their people."[3]

Consider the rippling effects of the Arab Spring or the current events taking place in Venezuela and the Mali. How and why do countries, regardless of their form of government, collapse into chaos breeding lawlessness, violence and regional instability? According to Richard Shultz, these uprisings stem from authoritarian elites wielding unaccountable and repressive security institutions that have serious levels of corruption and weak public services resulting in a lack of legitimacy.[4] In other words, bad governance is going to be the adversary for America moving forward. With these realities in mind, what can the United States do to counter these events in a time of reduced fiscal resources and a growing aversion toward nation building after 12 years of conflict and expenditure? It's the old adage of pay now or pay more later because territories with weak, or illegitimate, governments provide a permissive operational space for transnational criminals, violent extremists and other destabilizing elements

that harm local populations, increase regional instability and affect both U.S. and allied interests.[5] In an age of interconnectedness due to globalization and instant media, these problems must be addressed because what was once considered to be an isolated incident in one country can quickly result in regional unrest, as was seen with the Arab Spring.

To address these problems, this paper proposes there is a path we can take and it is one we have already walked. It is called Village Stability Operations (VSO) and it is currently being used effectively in Afghanistan to promote stability. VSO creates space for traditional decision making and dispute resolution while fostering greater linkages between local communities and nascent government authorities.[6] Furthermore, this paper proposes that both Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCCs) and interagency partners (IA) should consider VSO as both a strategic WAY and MEANS that is low cost and requires a small footprint to be effective in achieving our collective regional stability goals (ENDs). In highlighting the benefits of VSO, this paper will show the methodologies of the program, illustrate the effects sought by implementing it, and propose an implementation mechanism to enable a whole of government approach to counter the effects of bad governance.

<div align="center">Village Stability Operations (VSO)</div>

> The VSO program is one of the most hated aspects of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) by the Taliban. If the VSO program works—and it does—it is a mobilization of Afghans at the ground level, at the grass roots level, to take the business of their local security and their future into their own hands because ultimately their own elders and local communities raise the force from their own sons from that village or that community.[7]

In the summer of 2012, I had the privilege to serve as the operations director (J3) for the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A) which

had the responsibility of implementing and overseeing the VSO program throughout Afghanistan. During my eleven month tenure in this position, the joint command had a footprint that encompassed the entire theater of operations (TOO) and was responsible for the efforts of over 28,000 personnel which included; assigned U.S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) from all services, two conventional U.S. Army battalions, select Coalition Force SOF elements (CFSOF), Afghan SOF elements (Commandos and Special Forces detachments) and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) who composed the bulk of the forces within the command.[8] The combination of these elements working in concert with regionally aligned U.S. conventional units and other coalition armed forces throughout the country was at the forefront of General John Allen's counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy.

To achieve the goals of transferring security and governance responsibilities to the Afghan government, CJSOTF-A and our higher headquarters, the Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan (SOJTF-A) utilized three primary lines of effort (LOE). These LOEs included; VSO and ALP growth, Foreign Internal Defense (FID) with partnered Afghan SOF and police elements, and Counter Terrorist (CT) operations conducted via specialized U.S. and Afghan SOF elements within the command. As a means of comparison, over 75% of CJSOTF-A personnel and logistical efforts were placed against the sustainment and expansion of VSO against priority districts using 61 U.S. SOF teams.[9] What will become evident to the reader is VSO truly works at the grass roots level. It was shocking to see an area that was once teaming with insurgent activity transform because the local community and sub-national governing officials worked collectively to reassert themselves.

<u>Bottom Up Approach</u>

At its core VSO is a means to link population centric engagement to institutional top-down initiatives to foster the three pillars of the program; security, development and governance.[10] As VSO spreads, greater linkage to government functions is achieved because localized governing representatives are more responsive to the needs of the people. This accountability and responsiveness in turn enables greater government legitimacy and begins to form a sense of national identity and community. Upon reviewing the two different camps concerning state building or nation building, VSO can best be viewed as a merging of the institutional approach, which focuses on the state's ability to provide and implement security measures, while simultaneously growing the legitimacy of the governing elements of the state. This is highlighted in the Lemay-Herbert article entitled *Statebuilding without Nation-building*, when he states, "while accepting the institutional approach's focus on the security apparatus and state institutions, especially as a critical first step in state building processes, the legitimacy approach adds a layer of complexity in drawing attention to the state's underlying legitimacy.[11]

Localized COIN strategies have been used in the past by SOF achieving varied success. During the development of VSO, many lessons learned and best practices were drawn from Vietnam and the SOF establishment of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG). In the end however, the primary linkage between the two programs was the ability of VSO practitioners to figure out the "complicated web of rivalries, understand the alliances between individual villages and understanding how the villagers could be motivated to come together for a common purpose."[12]

Prior to the implementation of VSO in Afghanistan, much of the COIN efforts were focused on a top down approach by attempting to strengthen national institutions within the central government.[13] Though successful in countries that were historically accustomed to strong central governments, such as Germany and Japan following World War II, this top down approach was in large part foreign to the Afghans who habitually had a weak central government with power diffused to the local level.[14] By shifting efforts toward a bottom up COIN strategy, which began in earnest in the spring of 2010, numerous areas that were once enemy safe havens and command and control nodes were reduced significantly.

Stepping back it is important to understand how VSO and the establishment of a localized police force (LPF) fit into the overall COIN strategy. Simply put, the establishment of a LPF is a security tool that is rooted in the historical norms of the country/region and is accepted by the populace.[15] In the case of Afghanistan this was the ALP. The men who are sponsored and recruited into the program are from the villages they protect. They possess firsthand knowledge of the area and the people, which makes it difficult for bad actors or insurgents to infiltrate. As security is improved, development projects are increased and linked back to the central government via historically accepted governing entities (in Afghanistan these were termed district centers) which causes the populace to take a more active role in resisting the insurgency.[16]

In Afghanistan, the ALP was considered a localized layering force[17] that works in conjunction with the other elements of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) from both the MOD and the MOI to reduce the 'white space' available to the insurgency.[18]

Throughout the development of the program, the SOF teams are ever cognizant to remain neutral to sustain the legitimacy of the program by facilitating local shuras (traditional meetings amongst the tribal elders to resolve disputes/reach consensus) with village elders and government representatives.[19] This reinforced the premise of Afghans solving Afghan problems and supported a fair tribal and ethnic balance by requiring consensus based decision making.[20] In doing this, and by supporting traditional forms of governance and dispute resolution, VSO became the means by which the local and national levels of government intertwined.

Though not representative of all of Afghanistan, VSO, and the effects it is achieving in such a short timeframe, is impressive and constituted the greatest threat to the Taliban Quetta Shura's plan to regain power.[21] In 2013, the Reachback Research Center of the U.S. Army's Human Terrain System began to accumulate vast amounts of research on VSO/ALP effects. Their findings showed "a 99% confidence level that Afghans from districts in which respondents viewed ALP as responsible for and capable of protecting them and were also more connected to the government, more open to development, and more amenable to reconciliation and reintegration."[22] Implementing VSO provided the opportunity in Afghanistan for development programs to be administered by, with, and through the Afghan government in order to create a good balance of power between the central and the sub national level in accordance to the Afghan constitution.[23] Thus, VSO serves as a strategic concept which should be considered both a WAY and a MEANS to develop the social contract between the citizen and the state.

In order to illustrate this methodology, let us now review the framework of VSO. VSO consists of four phases; Shape, Hold, Build and Transition. These phases are not always linear and at times would shift back and forth based on the situation. Additionally it is important to highlight that while implementing VSO, the SOF teams relied heavily on additional enablers to aid them in creating the conditions for success. These additional enablers included; conventional infantry force augmentation, civil affairs (CA), military information support operations (MISO), public affairs and information operations (IO) to illicit support, bolster resolve and shape the message that Afghans are stepping forward to claim their future.[24] Upon considering the implementation of VSO in other areas to promote stability, it is critical that the reader understand that VSO requires these enablers to be effective.

Shape

Preferably months in advance of ever going into a given area, SOF teams conduct a detailed mission analysis using the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) process to include Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) to discern the core attributes of the existing government, population, enemy, and tribal dynamics.[25] Consider this the phase in which the SOF teams and the enablers conduct a detailed review of the operational environment in order to discern the key tasks by phase of VSO and the end state they wish to achieve based on the area they will be operating. These activities consider all aspects of the PMESII (political, military, economic, societal, infrastructure and information) environment as they plan their operations. As explained by CPT Deep from 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), "we conducted detailed planning of the operational area with heavy focus placed on historic and current enemy activity, ethnographic and tribal dynamics of the population, and traditional

power structures from which to garner legitimacy for both the central government and local security forces."[26]

Once the teams have a firm understanding of the operational environment, they then make contact with the key power brokers in the area. In Afghanistan this included district and provincial governors (DGOV/PGOV), police chiefs (DCOP/PCOP) and prominent village elders. Armed with detailed historical backgrounds and societal dynamics of the area, the SOF teams conduct key leader engagements (KLEs) with these actors, and after building rapport and trust, extend the offer to aid in the establishment of VSO/LPF in the local community. Once accepted, (which requires commitments of indigenous personnel to join the LPF from designated villages) the SOF team, central government authorities, and local elders would validate the event in a formal ceremony. In Afghanistan, this consisted of the SOF team along with CJSOTF-A, SOJTF-A and representatives from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) conducting a validation shura with the village elders to formalize the commitment. The SOF teams then infiltrate the operational area and live side by side with the villagers to show U.S. and central government commitment by providing protection. By living in and among the local tribes, it provides a permanent security presence which bolsters local resolve toward the program, increases the interaction of central government officials with the local ethnic groups and greatly aids in gathering information and atmospherics. This role of embedding into the local community could also be leveraged onto host nation security forces or other allied SOF fulfilling this role. The use of host nation SOF or other central government security forces, greatly aids in

linking the government to the people. The key is simply showing commitment toward the safety and security of the people which develops into trust and reliance.

Dependent upon the level and intensity of the instability threats that must be countered, the level and scope of security will differ. In Afghanistan the challenge was to counter an active insurgency which required clearing operations.[27] If enemy activity was high in a particular area clearing operations could take some time to counter using both surgical strike and wide area security sweeps with indigenous security forces. In Afghanistan we called these operations White Space Operations (WSO) which was a blend of surgical strike and wide area security sweeps using all the capabilities within SOJTF. Many times these operations are paired with larger conventional force battle space owners (BSO) and the other ANSF initiatives to have greater reach in a given area. As viable space is created by thinning or lowering the effects of instability, the SOF team shifts into the next phase, Hold.

Hold

The key to this phase of VSO is protecting the population. Even though clearing operations may have created a window of time and space to commence with establishing VSO and LPF in the village/local community, holding and expanding these gains are crucial to sustaining the program.[28] It is quite common to see insurgents, and other bad actors, target key local leaders and government officials in an attempt to intimidate and deter participation in the program. In Afghanistan, the typical tactics used were often night letters, targeted assassinations, and kidnappings to split village leadership and intimidate the population.[29] To counter these effects, the SOF team has to be proactive in securing the population by encouraging villagers to report nefarious acts to them and the local leadership so they may be countered and reduced. Building

and maintaining resiliency within the populace is crucial in this phase and may require additional clearing and surgical strike operations to be effective. However the best and most lasting method is establishing a LPF because it allows local communities to stand up and take ownership of their own security and draws upon how they have historically governed themselves.[30]

Case dependent, growing LPF capacity will vary based on the area. Many times the recruitment for a particular area will be met rather easily, whereas in more contentious areas recruiting will be a greater challenge. Recruiting is really dependent upon the level of commitment the local elders and government authorities have toward the program. In Afghanistan this meant working with the local DGOVs and DCOPs to take active roles in linking the LPFs in order to layer security and set conditions for greater amounts of development and economic exchange. In turn, it also required the village elders to ensure they supply the candidates needed to serve as LPF. The more commitment to the program, the better it performs and vice versa.

To properly field and secure the LPF, each candidate is required to undergo validation and vetting. In Afghanistan, this is done by having prominent village elders validate each candidate and agree to a background/family history review and biometrics scan. As this data is collected, it allows the SOF team to better screen each candidate and map the human terrain in their AORs. Using the tribal elders to personally approve each candidate affiliates them to the candidate and makes them responsible for their actions while also bolstering the elder's status within the tribe. This is of great importance within the Afghan culture and was noted in a review of illicit activity within the ALP ranks in the third quarter of 2012.[31] By comparison to other ANSF elements,

occurrences of crime, drug use and corruption within the ALP is significantly less and averaged to approximately one incident per 1,000 ALP.[32]

Once vetting is complete, and a local police commander is selected amongst the elders, each candidate receives training in humanitarian rights, rule of law and instruction in the basic light infantry tactics, techniques and procedures needed to perform their security functions. The location of the training will vary based on the area, but it is preferable that the training received is given locally by other central government security forces. This validates the capability of the central government to safeguard its citizenry and increases confidence within the public. In Afghanistan, Afghan Special Forces teams or district police trainers routinely conducted the training with SOF team oversight. As trained LPF members become available, they are then inserted back into their village areas with the oversight of both the central government authorities and the SOF team to safeguard the community from insurgent intimidation and attack.

Throughout this process, SOF teams continuously leverage both sub-national and local leadership to take control of the LPF and incorporate them into the larger state security framework. As the capabilities of the leaders grow and are validated by the maintenance of security, it forms a basis of reliance leading toward legitimacy which is an example of the central government being proactive in providing good governance. These localized solutions are then expanded and linked leading the SOF team into the next phase which is Build.

Build

The overall goal in this phase by the SOF team is linkage. Once linkages are created between communities to the acknowledged and accepted governing institutions it bolsters all forms of governance within an area. As LPF formations begin to take root

at the various villages, the SOF team is ever cognizant of maintaining this balance between traditional governance at the local level and the link to the central government. In Afghanistan this was done by using the district center and the DGOV/DCOPs. As these security corridors are established, it naturally improves economic transactions throughout the now linked communities and provides opportunities for development throughout an area. In doing this, the SOF team serves as facilitators by getting locals helping locals and solving their problems within their own systems by way of routine engagement. In Afghanistan, this was the shura system. As theses linkages mature, trust is developed amongst the participants and they begin to rely on each other and not the SOF team.[33] As this builds itself outward, and local communities are better linked into governmental functions of the state, it creates a "bubble of security" and good governance is expanded and transferred to locals and the governing officials to sustain it. In Afghanistan this responsibility rested with the DGOVs/PGOVs and DCOPs/PCOPs.[34]

Many challenges can occur in this phase, but it is crucial that governing officials and local leaders take ownership of the program to ensure its sustainment and effectiveness. Not paying the LPF on time, or not equipping the force undermines the program and security setbacks can occur. If done correctly however, the bubble of security expands throughout the area, which in turn sets the conditions for progress in other areas with development projects and economic expansion. This combination of events enhances overall state legitimacy by reinforcing the social contract.

Transition

As the name of the phase implies, this is where the SOF team backs away and local governing officials take on the responsibility of maintaining the gains achieved with

the program. As shown, much of the VSO program specifically targets the community

and the government officials psychologically by improving their internal self-reliance.

This bolsters their confidence in each other. As both the community and governing

officials grow to rely on one another for security they strengthen the bond and growth of

the social contract to maintain it. This further enhances development and economic

opportunities. In Afghanistan as these bonds presented themselves, they were validated

at a formal transition ceremony attended by prominent government officials and local

leaders.

As with any program, VSO has its own metrics that are evaluated to see if the

conditions merit transition to host nation forces (the ultimate goal). In Afghanistan, some

of the metrics utilized included the appointment and seating of competent leaders who

support one another, 70% of the ALP for a district have been approved by the local

leaders and are in place, and the DCOP is capable of sustaining the program

(pay/training).[35] Regardless of where VSO is implemented, metrics based on local

conditions will be required to determine if progress is being made and the program is

working. Once an area transitions to the host nation to sustain it, it still must be

monitored to ensure it is sustained. To do this, the SOF team maintains contact with the

governing officials and prominent local leaders to identify negative trends before they

expand and if required implement quick effective responses should an area start to

deteriorate.

VSO Challenges

VSO itself is not a panacea, but if done correctly, and given sufficient time to take

root, it produces greater security, development and governance. That stated the

greatest challenge in sustaining the program revolves around local leaders following

through on their duties and being responsive to the needs to the populace. This is a basic social contract issue. When this does not occur through actions such as, government officials showing favoritism toward a specific tribe/ethnic group, or requiring bribes to fulfill their duties, it undercuts the progress made and delegitimizes the central government.[36] When these situations occur, bad actors quickly seize these opportunities to re-establish themselves, leading once again to instability. Therefore, SOF team oversight is critical to ensure these problems are quickly identified. As corrupt or incompetent leaders are identified, the SOF team requests removal of the individual(s) via higher headquarters and central authorities. If not successfully removed, for example due to tribal or familial relationships, bad actors are isolated and marginalized in an attempt to develop other leaders to fill the gap.

Due to varying levels of government effectiveness, VSO implementation must conceptualize the program not as extending the central governments reach to every village, but as a means of building village capacity for self-governance.[37] These self-governing villages, in turn, are linked and are able to negotiate their relationships with the central government and hold it more politically accountable.[38] This premise reinforces the relationship noted earlier by Lemay-Herbert in merging both institutional approaches and legitimacy. Now that we have laid out the basics of VSO methodology and highlighted some of its associated challenges let's review good governance to see how VSO could be applied in other regions to further U.S. interests.

Good Governance

When trying to capture exactly what constitutes good governance, the ability to establish an agreed upon framework can be extremely challenging. As noted earlier, the application of VSO should be considered as both a WAY and a MEANS in achieving

this illusive term, good governance. Though the central government of Afghanistan was by no means a model of good governance, the use of VSO in select districts set conditions to re-establish good localized governance models and develop relationships to the central government. With this in mind, let us look at governance and what aspects of it can benefit from the use of VSO.

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, there are eight characteristics of good governance. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.[39] These characteristics are ideal and are highly unlikely to be achieved in a failing or failed state environment in any sort of reasonable timeframe. Therefore for the purposes of our review, good governance will consist of; security, services and accountability. Narrowing this focus to three aspects may seem deceiving because these three actually address the details of the eight aspects listed above. These three elements nest together in order to create the conditions for legitimacy which is required to establish the social contract between the citizen and the state.

Security is required in order to allow a state and the community to provide and participate in the exchange of services to include economic exchange. Services entail providing access to education, medical treatment, and a legal framework required to settle disputes and determine rules based outcomes. Finally, accountability underpins the system by holding both state representatives and the citizenry responsible for their actions, or inactions. These basic fundamentals allow a governance model to take shape, resulting in the establishment of order that fosters greater prosperity and

consistency to everyday life. Without these basic functions being fulfilled by a state, it

will result in the development of a vacuum that is quickly filled by criminals, terrorists,

violence, and drugs which then feed upon disenfranchised populations and uncontrolled

territory.[40] With this in mind, how does VSO support the three elements of good

governance?

<u>VSO and Good Governance</u>

As noted above, the three governing functions required by a state are nested

together. In considering the application of VSO against these requirements one element

drives the others and vice versa. First of all, use of VSO methodology directly confronts

challenges to security at the local level while linking communities to communities via the

security corridors it creates. As security expands, it allows a government to control

greater amounts of territory while also setting conditions for greater economic exchange

to occur amongst the people. This bubble of security grows and squeezes out, or better

illuminates, bad actors creating conditions that permit the government to confront the

problem. As governing officials interact with local police forces and local leaders, VSO

provides a venue for the citizenry to express their grievances and relay their

development needs to the central government. This serves as the basis for the

establishment of a representative local governing body to take root and link into the

functions of the state. Once this access is gained by the local communities, it begins to

set conditions for accountability of governing officials.

In confronting the second variable of services, greater amounts of security

orchestrated by VSO allows both the state and the international community better

access to communities once considered too dangerous or too remote. As basic

community services, such as medical clinics, schools, and court systems, are

established and supported by the state, the state garners greater amounts of legitimacy and reliance from the citizenry. This leads to stability. Stability in turn, allows the state to access local resources to aid in sustaining the services and could eventually lead toward a willingness of the people to pay a services tax for their sustainment.

Upon considering accountability, VSO practitioners are reliant upon state appointed or locally elected representatives, to fulfill their governing duties. When incompetent or corrupt leaders are identified all actions must be taken in concert with the central government to remove them. If unsuccessful, it is critical to marginalize and isolate their influence in order to allow their governance gap to be filled with proactive alternatives. This may be accomplished by the state authorizing select local elections to take place to determine leadership positions, or by direct appointment of community leaders who are known to the central government. Careful consideration is imperative because unless the governing officials fulfill their duties, central government legitimacy is lost and extremely difficult to revalidate. One key benefit of local leaders serving in a leadership capacity for the state is they are a known entity in the areas they will govern and could be very accommodating in implementing positive change if given the resources to do so. This also incentivizes communities to participate in governing while growing linkages to the state which fosters overall state legitimacy.

WAYs and MEANs

Now that we have shown how VSO methodology works and how it supports greater governance, let us look at how the GCCs and IA partners can use it to support their regional stability and security strategies. As seen, VSO can set the conditions which provide host nation governments a WAY to better perform their governance functions. With that in mind, how can GCCs and IA partners use it as a MEANs to

incentivize struggling governments to implement it? Unless a state is willing to support the program and work with the practitioners in implementing it, success will not follow. Additionally upon initial review of the operational environment, it is likely that many countries may look upon the program as meddling in their sovereignty and will be resistant toward implementing it. Habitually, states that are unable or unwilling to improve governance typically have large amounts of corruption and could view the program as a threat in exposing these practices. This was resident in Afghanistan, but as legitimate localized governance functions took hold and expanded, corruption was lessened due to oversight and accountability.

To encourage states toward VSO, the various levers of national power (Diplomatic/Information/Military/Economic) can be utilized to incentivize participation. This can be done using a combination of carrot and stick approaches, to include withholding development funding or military sales and capacity building programs, but the greatest incentive is self-preservation of the ruling class themselves. As seen with the Arab Spring, it is in the best interests of governments to improve governance and those who do not do so at their own peril. Furthermore once the governing elite appreciate the economic benefits VSO can bring by creating a virtuous cycle of security and stability it further incentivizes participation. Using both diplomacy and the information aspects of national power, the United States and our international partners can highlight the benefits states and their elected officials receive from practicing and implementing better governance.[41]

Once a state acknowledges the need to improve governance and is willing to implement VSO practices, the Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multi-national (JIIM)

partners can incentivize its sustainment by the use of greater amounts of investment and partnering opportunities, which in turn spreads greater regional stability. The willingness of a state to implement VSO is the critical component of the process, but if a state does not possess the capacity, expertise or the resources to implement it, that is where the GCC and the JIIM community can step in to assist.

The concerted use of both carrots and sticks to encourage participation in VSO will be required in a time of diminishing fiscal alternatives to effectively achieve U.S. regional stability goals in the future. This point is highlighted in the most recent Defense Strategic Guidance document.

> Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership. Across the globe we will seek to be the security partner of choice, pursuing new partnerships with a growing number of nations whose interests and viewpoints are merging into a common vision of freedom, stability, and prosperity. *Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives,* relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities.[42]

These "innovative, low cost and small footprint" approaches are exactly what VSO is and, if implemented as part of the GCCs theater campaign plans (TCP), will greatly enhance the nature of building partner capacity (BPC) in the future while increasing stability in the locations where it is implemented. As the GCCs review their AORs, they can prioritize which states are in the greatest jeopardy of failing and work with the U.S. country teams to implement the program.

Some might say VSO is great if used in a COIN environment but it isn't applicable in states that aren't experiencing an active revolt. VSO, as a concept, is highly tailorable to local conditions. To this point, the use of VSO should be considered both a WAY and MEANs which the GCCs, JIIM and host nations can off-ramp revolts

before they ever occur. From a host nation point of view it is the WAY in which they can improve good governance. Based on a current host nation's governance gaps the dial of VSO can be specifically shaped to develop access points for a central government to better link into the citizenry. These gaps, whether they are in security, services or accountability can be addressed using not only GCC and JIIM resources (MEANs) but also the host nation's, which further adds legitimacy and cost sharing into the process. This sort of preventative partnering will be critical in a time of diminishing resources by allowing the United States to cost share both with the host nation and the Multi-national community.

The current methodology of exerting large amounts of capital to bolster host nation security services and economic development is unsustainable and will require a new methodology to gain stability in the future. This is where VSO can help provide low cost alternatives to traditional security activities. Between 2001 through 2011 the United States alone has spent roughly 321 billion in Afghanistan to develop the country to include, the building of the Afghan National Security Forces. By way of comparison it cost $36,000 to train, equip and field one Afghan Uniformed Police officer versus $6,000 to train, equip and field one Afghan local police officer.[43] Doing the math, it is much more sustainable for a host nation government to sustain localized police forces that are embedded into a community versus trying to develop a large nationally funded security service.

As GCCs and the JIIM community look toward the future and access how they can build partner capacity, the use of VSO methodologies should be listed as a viable, cost efficient, and effective WAY and MEANs to assist host nation governments in

developing good governance. From a host nation's point of view it is certainly more sustainable and would likely be better received by the populace than the growth of a larger state security apparatus. Now that we have discussed the incentives associated with implementing VSO, let us look at how we can actually implement the program across any GCC AOR to further U.S. interests and gain regional stability.

The How

As GCCs and JIIM partners work together to enhance stability using VSO methodologies in their assigned AORs, consideration must be given to provide them greater authorities to enhance preventative partnering efforts. Currently there are a number of named authorities and associated funds that exist within the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that direct how, what and who the DoD, the Department of State (DoS) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) can and cannot partner with to gain the effects of regional stability. Many of these authorities are more broad and flexible when applied against named operations, such as Operation OBSERVANT COMPASS[44] in Uganda, but many are not. This limits partnering efforts and interagency coordination outside conflict zones.[45]

In an effort to increase flexibility within the existing authorities, the FY 2012 NDAA section 1207 created the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) as a four year pilot project.[46] The GSCF's purpose is to carry out security and counterterrorism training, and rule of law programs.[47] The GSCF is seen as an important step in improving U.S. efforts to enable foreign military and security forces because it looks to create greater JIIM integration on security assistance by pooling funds and enabling unified action.[48] Prior to this pilot program, each department had fenced authorizations that could not be used unless earmarked for specific activities as outlined in the NDAA.

Furthermore, in April 2013 Presidential Policy Directive 23 was released that discusses security sector assistance.[49] PPD 23 directs efforts toward "strengthening the ability of the United States to help allies and partner nations build their own security capacity, consistent with the principles of good governance and the rule of law."[50] Couple PPD 23 with the GSCF and they directly point toward the implementation of VSO methodologies using a whole of government, multinational approach, to attain U.S. national interests because it is administered via DoS with concurrence by DoD.[51]

Upon developing both theater and country team specific strategies to attain stability and good governance, GCCs, JIIM partners and country teams can integrate their planning efforts using VSO as a WAY to attack both problem sets. Based on the accessed governance and security challenges of each country, the development of standing governance teams should be formed to fulfill the requirements of VSO implementation. These governance teams would likely be similar to many of the provincial reconstruction teams (PRT)[52] employed in both Iraq and Afghanistan which included elements of DoD, DoS and USAID. These PRTs varied in size and scope and were deployed to some of the most remote areas in both countries to assist local leaders in developing security, development and governance. By merging the concept of PRTs with the practitioners of VSO (SOF teams and enablers), the GCCs and the country teams will have at their disposal a capability to attack some of the most pressing governance problems in their AORs and in turn promote stability.

After the GCCs and JIIM partners collectively scan their operational environment and identify the countries with the highest risk of failing, focused efforts could be coordinated with the country teams by way of the Ambassador and their Senior Defense

Officials (SDO). The Ambassador would take lead in engaging politically with the host nation while the SDO and Department of Justice representatives would engage with the host nation's security forces. The results of these engagements would be incorporated into the implementation of the program. Following this consultation with the country team, and a careful review of host nation existing capabilities, tailored teams of VSO practitioners would then be sent to implement the program with host nation support.

The collective development of the plan with both the country teams and the host nation allow the size and scope of VSO methodologies to be specifically tailored to the targeted country. If the host nation has relatively decent security, the military security arm could be lessened, if the country in question has vast swaths of territory that are not governed or under governed, the security arm expanded etc. VSO methodologies may not require the development of additional security forces but more likely the professionalizing of existing ones. By focusing the efforts toward existing capabilities and improving upon them, it serves as a cost efficient and effective way of achieving the effects sought. Couple security development to the IA efforts of enhancing local governance and development and you start to see linkages grow to the state and improvements in the daily lives of the citizenry which leads to greater stability.

On the ground, VSO practitioners would work directly for the Ambassador with a dual line of reporting to the GCC to keep them apprised on their status and request support as needed to further the mission. For instance, if high level malign actors are noted to be operating in the targeted country, locally advised security forces may be an appropriate response. If local forces are not capable based on the threat, the Ambassador, after consulting with the host nation and the GCC, could request surgical

strike forces to intervene using the forward postured Global SOF network.[53] This

embedded mechanism within VSO makes it uniquely suited toward tackling governance

challenges in the future. This example provides the GCCs and the JIIM partners a lens

to use in developing and shaping their strategies depending on the operational

environment.

As mentioned earlier when discussing VSO phasing, the most crucial aspect of

the program is getting the host nation to agree to its implementation. Toward this end,

the Ambassador and his staff would serve as the touchstone for maintaining this

commitment and would adjust the funding and the program using both carrots and

sticks to achieve compliance within the targeted country. In the end, it's not a question

of if the methodologies work but of the host nation's willingness to commit to the

process.

VSO is exactly the sort of proactive approach that supports the Quadrennial

Defense Review (QDR) released in March 2014. As per the document, "the United

States will continue to advise, train, and equip partner forces to perform essential tasks

against terrorist networks, complementing U.S. activities in the field."[54] By implementing

VSO methodologies via a standing JIIM force it directly meets the stated goal of the

second pillar of the QDR which is, "building security globally.[55] To be more specific it

leverages host nation partners to achieve our interests by helping them provide better

security and governance toward its citizens which in turn creates country and regional

stability.

Conclusion

As noted, America's security in the future is threatened more by weak and failing

states than by other nation states acting aggressively toward us directly. To counter

these negative trends, it will require America to work proactively to thwart the cause and effect relationship that exists between poor governance and instability to achieve U.S. national interests. By applying the tenants of VSO proactively, and pre-emptively, against the effects of poor governance, GCCs and Interagency stakeholders can mitigate the conditions that encourage instability and diminish the potential for an active revolt to develop. As the world becomes more interconnected due to globalization and advancements in communications, simply going forward with business as usual using sporadic engagement will not suffice. Attaining stability and good governance will require persistence and patience to be effective. VSO can achieve these ENDs, but it is not a quick fix. If done correctly, as a JIIM effort, and in concert with the host nation, it will serve as a more lasting approach in achieving regional stability and America's security interests. As with any relationship though, it takes time to cultivate trust. This is even truer when trying to reverse the effects and history related to bad governance.

Endnotes

[1] Robert M. Gates, *Defense Strategic Guidance, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012), 3.

[2] Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart, Fixing Failed States "A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World," 3.

[3] Robert Gates, "Speech Delivered to the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign in Washington, DC," July 15, 2008, http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1262.

[4] Richard H. Schultz Jr., *Security Force Assistance and Security Sector Reform,* Joint Special Operations University Report 13-5 (Joint Special Operations University, September 2013), 40.

[5] Matthew Denny, *Preventing Conflict: Interagency Village Stability Operations Model* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, June 2012), 1, https://www.pksoi.org/document_repository/doc_lib/IAE_VSO_Model_Jun2012.pdf

[6] Ibid.

[7] General John Allen, DoD transcript, August 23, 2012, 5, http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5105.

[8] LTC Carl Kelly.

[9] Headquarters, NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police, Bottom up Counterinsurgency* (NATO Special Operations Component Command, June 1, 2013).

[10] Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, *Tactical Focus and Concerns* (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force, April 1, 2011) 1.

[11] Nicholas Lemay-Herbert, "Statebuilding without Nation-building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutionalist Approach," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, February 26, 2009, 24.

[12] Linda Robinson, "One Hundred Victories. Special Operations and the Future of American Warfare" Book Discussion with Linda Robinson on Village Stability Operations and the Future of the American Way of War, by Octavian Manea," *Small Wars Journal,* February 6, 2014, 2.

[13] LT Kenneth Doyle and Timothy Hrushka, "Developing VSO and the ALP (interview with BG Bolduc)," *COIN Common Sense,* April 2013, 11.

[14] Jim Thomas and Chris Daugherty, *Beyond the Ramparts, the Future of U.S. Special Operations Forces* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), 2013), 23.

[15] Doyle and Hrushka, " Developing VSO and the ALP (interview with BG Bolduc)," 13..

[16] LTC Carl Kelly.

[17] Author's Definition: A localized layering force is a security forces that has been trained and employed locally within their village/community areas that compliments existing state security elements. (National police or National armed forces). These forces man key terrain in the vicinity of their communities and can inform higher authorities of nefarious activities they are unable to independently police. This type of layered security negates the operational space of insurgents or criminals.

[18] Doyle and Hrushka, "Developing VSO and the ALP (interview with BG Bolduc)," 12.

[19] Ibid., 11.

[20] U.S. Department of Defense, *Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, July 2013), 97, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Section_1230_Report_July_2013.pdf.

[21] Doyle and Hrushka, "Developing VSO and the ALP (interview with BG Bolduc)," 14.

[22] Patricia J. Blocksome, Kirk D. Taylor, and Michael D. Weltsch, "VSO: A Program That Works," 1.

[23] Denny, *Preventing Conflict: Interagency Village Stability Operations Model*, 3.

[24] NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police, Bottom up Counterinsurgency*, 64.

[25] CPT Alex Deep, 1st Bn, 3d SFG(A) Village Stability Operations and the Application of Special Warfare across the Contemporary Global Operating Environment. December 2013, 2.

[26] Ibid., 3.

[27] Author's Definition: Clearing operations are operations that target specific bad actors/organizations or geographic locations that are known to facilitate insurgent or criminal activities. They are conducted using direct action surgical strike operations which target a specific person or group of persons or wide area security sweeps. In the conduct of wide area security sweeps, larger formations of conventional and or special operations forces patrol a larger area around local communities in order to uncover caches of munitions and or kill/capture insurgents/bad actors operating in a certain geographical location. In Afghanistan both surgical strike and wide area security sweeps were conducted using Afghan SOF partnered forces.

[28] NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police, Bottom up Counterinsurgency*, 21.

[29] Ibid., 22.

[30] Ibid., 21.

[31] LTC Chris Hensley, "The Challenges of Creating an Honest Local Police Program within a Corrupt System," *COIN Common Sense,* April 2013, 5.

[32] Ibid.

[33] LTC Carl Kelly.

[34] NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police, Bottom up Counterinsurgency*, 29.

[35] Ibid., 30.

[36] LTC Carl Kelly.

[37] NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police, Bottom up Counterinsurgency*, 86.

[38] Ibid.

[39] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "What is Good Governance?" http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp (accessed January 23, 2014)

[40] Ibid.

[41] Author's Definition of the benefits both the states and governing officials gain from practicing good governance. If a state is practicing good governance (security, services, and accountability), it lends itself toward greater investment which in turn allows for greater state stability. As stability is increased populations increase their standard of living and support for the governing officials increases. The more the state is able to set conditions for a fair, just and equitable environment that is inclusive the stronger the social contract is between citizen and state.

[42] U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Strategic Guidance, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2012), 3, http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf.

[43] Doyle and Hrushka, "Developing VSO and the ALP (interview with BG Bolduc)," 14.

[44] GlobalSecurity.org, "Observant Compass," http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/observant-compass.htm Operation Observant Compass is the name of the deployment of US forces to Uganda and other countries in central Africa to counter the Lord's Resistance Army (C-LRA). The force provider to the operation's US Africa Command (AFRICOM) C-LRA Control Element (ACCE) for the operation is the Special Operations Command and Control Element - Horn of Africa (SOCCE-HOA), the special operations forces component of AFRICOM's Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). The US effort is to help a 4-nation partnership (South Sudan, Uganda, Central Africa Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo) counter the LRA, a mission that includes training, funding, airlift, logistics, communications and intelligence support, specifically, fusing intelligence and support to operations.

[45] Ray Locker, "Anti-Kony Mission in Africa Could Stretch Well into 2015," *USA TODAY,* September 12, 2013.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 1.

[49] The White House*, Office of the Press Secretary, Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Assistance Policy* (Washington, DC: The White House, April 5 2013), http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy (accessed March 8, 2014).

[50] Ibid.

[51] Serafino, *Global Security Contingency Fund: Summary and Issue Overview*.

[52] Wikipedia, "Reconstruction Team," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provincial_Reconstruction_Team (accessed March 21, 2014). A Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is a unit introduced by the United States government, consisting of military officers, diplomats, and reconstruction subject matter experts, working to support reconstruction efforts in unstable states. Their common purpose is to empower local governments to govern their constituents more effectively.

[53] U.S. Special Operations Command, *The Global SOF Network,* March 22, 2012.

[54] Charles Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 4, 2014), 37.

[55] Ibid., 5.