

Refining the Civil Affairs Value Proposition: Governance in the Modern Operational Environment

John Wirges

The 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) identifies the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, and transboundary threats as primary challenges to the United States and its allies. The NDS suggests that U.S. success in a multi-polar world requires a whole-of-government approach, campaigning across all elements of national power. Department of Defense capabilities that can gain strategic understanding, overmatch, and deterrence are more important than ever. One such capability is Civil Affairs. CA was originally created to support governance. Through more defined education and training, as well as enhanced relationships and trust with interagency colleagues, CA can illuminate and help create cognitive and physical resiliencies that deter conflict and blunt its impact should it occur.

This paper recommends doctrinal refinements through standard FM revision or special texts which include greater political military analysis and the relationship of interconnected PMESII systems, as well as corresponding social and anthropological systems, to governance. These doctrinal and educational updates should showcase how existing methodologies and tools, such as civil network development, mapping of critical systems, and resource allocation are easy to implement solutions towards articulating how a governance capability manifests at all echelons of CA. Advanced education courses offered to the civil affairs organizations, built to accommodate a USACAPOC Annual Training, can be built in a fundable solution to provide advanced training on systems analysis, network development, and associated infrastructure.

Additionally, special operations should continue integrating CAO with sensitive activities and network development, directly impacting governance and underground / auxiliary development. These steady state operations support strategic objectives, increasing the cost of adversaries' actions and maintaining conflict below the threshold of large-scale violence; over time, these resiliencies support our allies and harden our partners' cognitive and physical spaces.

Policy and organizational progress, such as an enhanced interagency assignment or loan program may benefit both active duty and reserve soldiers, and provide increased institutional knowledge on diplomacy, development, and defense relationships. CA professionals should be provided the opportunity to work with colleagues in the interagency. Loan programs for officers and NCOs with the interagency—and interagency loan programs with CA formations—will broaden interagency understanding. Additionally, these programs build long term trust and understanding vital to the whole of government approach to strategic problems, synergizing effects to deter our nation's adversaries.