

Distinguishing Between Security Force Assistance & Foreign Internal Defense: Determining A Doctrine Road-Ahead

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There is confusion and a disconnect between Security Force Assistance (SFA) and Foreign Internal Defense (FID). It is unclear how or if they support an overarching theme. For years the US Armed Forces have used the FID construct to describe how the military element of US foreign policy supports internal security assistance to friendly nations. Recently, the Secretary of Defense (SecDEF) promulgated a newer, larger construct called SFA. Many in the military view SFA as when U.S. and partner forces rebuild security infrastructure during stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations.

The new paradigm comes from a realization as spelled out in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), that the U.S. must train partner forces rather than just provide security for them. This grew out of a void in our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. No secret here, the QDR states that we need “multipurpose forces to train, equip, and advise” and “deploy and engage with partner nations”¹. As a result the SecDEF created the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) in 2006. This center is the U.S. Armed Forces focal point for SFA.

This paper will frame the basics for comparison between the current paradigm (FID) and the new one (SFA). Then it will describe why both of these elements fit under a Building Partnership (BP) framework. This framework should be clearly and appropriately described in one doctrinal theme.

The confusion between the frameworks begins with the “official” definitions. FID is defined in Joint Publication (JP) 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, as, “participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government or other designated organization to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency.”² While no official joint definition exists, at least not yet, the Joint Center of International Security Force Assistance (JCISFA) defines SFA as, “Unified action to generate, employ, sustain, and assist host nation or regional security forces in support of legitimate authority.”³

The definitions – of SFA and FID - do very little to distinguish them apart. While the fundamental techniques used by our troops to train, assist, advise and equip these forces

are the same as those laid out in FID joint doctrine, the operations possess different focus and have different political aims. The focus of all US FID efforts is to support the Host Nation's (HN) program of Internal Defense and Development (IDAD). IDAD is ideally a preemptive plan of action. If an insurgency, illicit drug, terrorist, or other threat develops, IDAD becomes an active approach to fight that threat⁴. SFA differs from FID in that FID primarily deals with internal threats. SFA deals with internal and external threats as they are often connected, and SFA focuses on the same security forces that deal with both types of threats (see Figure 1).

Foreign Internal Defense Vs Security Force Assistance

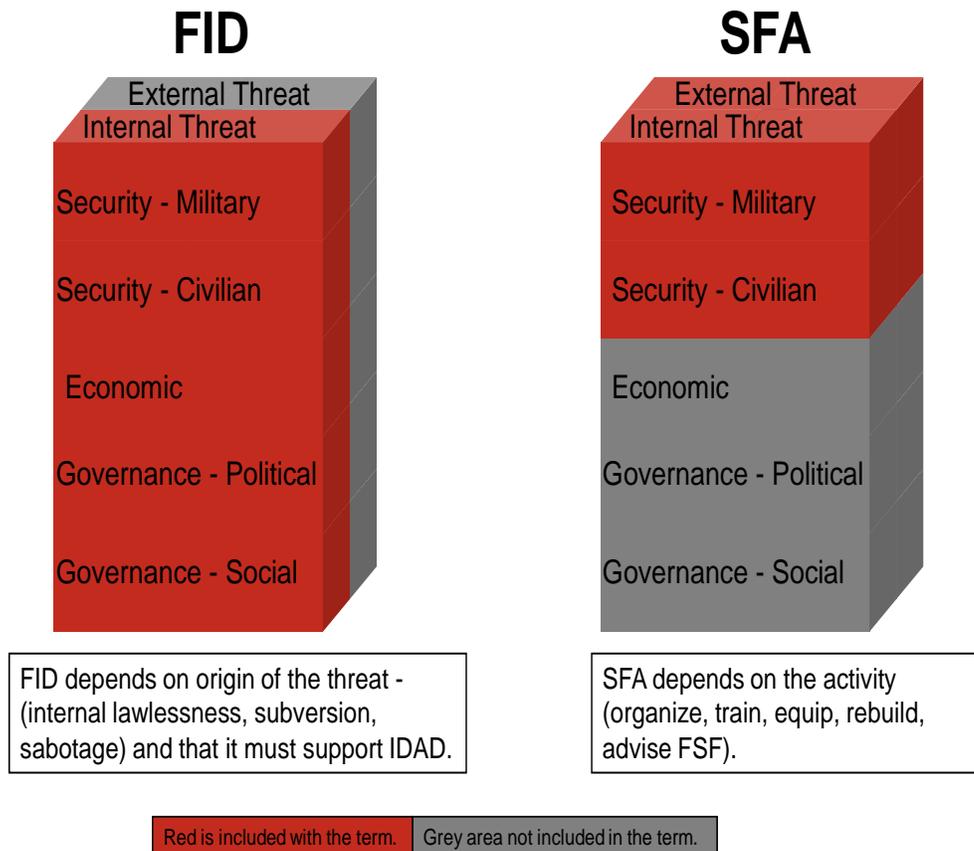


Figure 1. FID vs SFA

The overall military force structure is, or should be, designed to operate across the spectrum of conflict— combating internal threats such as insurgency, subversion and lawlessness (FID), defending against external threats, or serving as coalition partners/peacekeepers in other regions—(a larger construct also known as building partnership capacity).

The Doctrinal Road Ahead

FID provides a strong basis upon which the Department of Defense (DOD) and the US government can establish a doctrinal foundation that planners, commanders, and a joint task force can all use when called upon to work with foreign security forces in any operating environment. FID doctrine, which calls for a whole-of-government approach to support a HN's IDAD plan, can serve as the foundation for SFA operations doctrine. While it should serve as the foundation, however, it may not be overarching, nor adequate in and of itself.

Some believe that our doctrine is sufficient to meet the current and future complex environments in which US military and interagency organizations will find themselves. But, an obvious measure of participation from all US instruments of power is proof of disconnected foreign security force efforts across the US government (USG) lingers and needs a solid vector.

These two terms co-exist together because, as a new model of warfare predicts, future conflicts will blur the distinction between war and peace, combatants and noncombatants. The US must be prepared for the full spectrum of conflict from all fronts (internal, external, etc.) and realize that by not preparing our forces for employment of irregular forms of warfare is a recipe for defeat.⁵ That proper preparation will increase the options for US decision makers. Those preparations must be based on “the principles of transparency, constructive competition to encourage innovation, agility and adaptability, collaboration and partnership.”³

The 2006 QDR envisioned the US military would tailor assistance and training for select foreign military forces. Specifically, that US forces possess and acquire “the ability to train, mentor, advise foreign security forces and conduct counterinsurgency campaigns.”³ The demands of irregular warfare and the ability to operate effectively alongside other US agencies, allies, or partners, will require flexibility in preparing for wider asymmetric challenges. The DOD will need to increase investments focused on developing and maintaining appropriate partnerships with the US government and nations in fighting terrorism.

In order to do the above, doctrinal clarity is vital. Create one overarching theme/name, such as a BP or an Irregular Warfare (IW) joint publication. This should be where the relationships between SFA, FID, Counterinsurgency, Stability Operations, etc., are solidified. IW is warfare that no single Service is uniquely responsible for providing—all must do it. Just like FID and now SFA, the assumption is every Service will fully embrace it. Though maybe not as “sexy” as dropping Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM), this could serve as a spring-board for some services to truly exploit past success and ultimately provide another avenue to “get into the fight.”

The overarching BP framework would effectively could cover most terms (see Figure 2), including some overlap with IW. The 2008 National Defense Strategy says, “arguably the most important military component of the struggle against violent extremists is not

the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we help prepare our partners to defend and govern themselves.”⁶ How important is it—very. The draft of the new DODD 5100.1, *Functions of the Department of Defense*, has recognized the need for this joint capability in BP. In order to enable operations in all environments and forms of warfare there is a requirement to shape a range of actors, – from our traditional partners, to those reluctant friends who need convincing of shared interests, to those that we might induce away from an adversarial position. This approach will ultimately build the capacity in the global community to defend against internal threats and external aggression.



Figure 2. Building Partnerships

In summary, the inadequate definitions used to describe SFA and FID has caused confusion between describing those terms. The two can co-exist but require clarity in describing the operations in which they support. This clarity could be provided by creating one overarching doctrinal theme—Building Partnerships.

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¹ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report 6 February 2006*, 23, 42.

² Joint Publication 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, 28.

³ Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance, *Commander's Handbook for Security Force Assistance*, July 2008, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1.

⁴ Joint Publication 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics Techniques and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense*, 110.

⁵ Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies (Arlington, VA: December 2007), 5.

⁶ Department of Defense, *2008 National Defense Strategy*, 8.

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