

FORCE OF CHOICE

Edited By

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9. Clausewitz, *On War*, 114.
10. Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 71.
11. Clausewitz, *On War*, 194.
12. T. N. Dupuy, *Understanding War: History and Theory of Combat*, (St Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1987), 82.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Clausewitz, *On War*, 195.
15. James E. Marazek, *The Fall of Eben Emael*, (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1970), 31-32.
16. *Ibid.*, 36
17. W. H. McRaven, *SPECOPS* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995). The book develops a theory of special operations based on extensive study of eight cases. These include the German's assault on Fort Eben Emael, the Italian manned-torpedo attack at Alexandria, the British Commando raid on St. Nazaire, Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini, the British X-craft raid on the German battleship *Tirpitz*, the US Ranger raid on Cabanatuan POW camp, Son Tay, and Israelis at Entebbe.
18. *Ibid.*, 1.
19. Special Boat Service Motto.
20. M. H. Arnold, "Air Force," in *The Atomic Age in One World or None*, eds. Dexter Masters and Katherine Way (New York: 1946): 26-27.
21. Joint Chiefs of Staff cited by P. Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986): 747.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Once again, we should not confuse what special forces are capable of doing in support of the national interests (Foreign Internal Defense, Peacetime Engagement, CSAR, etc.) and what defines a true special operation mission.
24. Missions like the *Enola Gay* and *Doolittle's Raid* on Tokyo had all the qualities that merit recognition as a special operation. The men were specially selected and specially trained. *Doolittle's* bombers were modified and the *Enola Gay* was specially equipped. The missions were of obvious national importance. These missions also meet the four special operation's criteria: the missions were high risk, required a man in the loop, and were executed with a small force against a fortified position.
25. Wylie, J.C., *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* (Annapolis, MD: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 23.
26. George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, 25 (1947): 566-82.
27. Henry A. Kissinger, "Reflections on Containment", *Foreign Affairs*, 73 (1994): 114.
28. *Ibid.*
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30. B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Second Edition, Revised (New York: Meridian, 1991).
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CHAPTER 4

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOF SOLDIER

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Anna Simons

Evolution is a tricky term. Does it mean progress or does it mean change? Without question, the status of US Special Operations Forces (SOF) has improved markedly over time. Comprised of US Army Special Forces (SF), Rangers, and civil affairs and psychological operations units, as well as an aviation unit (Task Force 160), Air Force Combat Control Teams (CCT), Air Force pilots and crews, and Navy SEALs, SOF now has its own command and its own Commander in Chief (CINC). This not only accords SOF official heft, but with its right to exist assured, SOF has been able to make programmatic changes to secure itself (and its personnel) a rosier future. In 1987, for instance, US Army Special Forces was finally made its own branch. This means army officers can now spend their entire careers in Special Forces. No longer does Special Forces attract only mavericks and ne'er-do-wells. On the face of it, this alone would seem to signify progress. However, there are those who consider this switch to have been a mixed blessing: change, yes; progress, no. In their view, one unintended effect has been rampant conventionalization. Meanwhile, were we to ask whether there has been change *or* progress in what has been required of Special Forces soldiers themselves, we would likely discover no evolution at all. Or at least, none yet.

With the end of the Cold War and the dawning of a new Information Age, many contend that SOF had no choice but to reassess its missions, its essential task lists, its technical capabilities, orientations, and recruitment strategies. Changes in geopolitics, weaponry, communications, international relations, and who our opponents were (or would likely be) demanded nothing

less. Not only did the post-Cold War world appear more complex and interconnected than it was when the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Special Air Service (SAS), and Office of Strategic Services (OSS) were first conceived, but one might think innovation in such an environment would best be achieved through careful planning and from on high. This presupposes that planners can successfully predict the future, yet no one managed to prevent the terror attacks of 11 September 2001. Nor should we presume that planners will be any more prescient in the future.

Even so, this does not mean we are wholly unprepared to cope with sudden change, or with the need to react to it. There is a method by which we can respond to uncertainty, turmoil, and flux, and that is to concentrate on what we know will *not* change: human nature. If, for instance, we consider what binds members of groups together, as well as what drives groups apart, there are certain immutable truths. These apply equally to insurgents and counter-insurgents, to terrorists and anti-terrorists, nationalists, communists, co-religionists, and combat soldiers. Technology may morph at warp speed, but the way men in groups interact has not altered appreciably over time. Nor is it likely to. Indeed, if "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*" resonates, it is because men continue to react to one another in ways that are predictable, even militarily predictable.

Strip away all of the military hardware, and what explains SOF's success is group dynamics. The men SOF selects for its teams, and the fact that they are selected *for* teams, make SOF both unconventional and incomparably resilient. It is unlike any other kind of military unit, in that the teams are configured to generate innovation from within. This makes them ideal for combating unconventional threats or accomplishing non-standard missions. At the same time, however, the element that makes teams work – human chemistry – can't be imposed or emplaced. In contrast to weapons platforms or pieces of equipment, teams are an unsurpassed mechanism, which is not to say that teams are omni-capable, or that they can't be ruined. Hence, my focus in this chapter: on the one hand, focussing primarily on Army Special Forces teams, I examine what has not evolved and what cannot if SOF teams are to continue to function; on the other, I suggest that those who seek to privilege technological adaptations and other post-modern changes should be cautious. Bad things usually occur when people are assembled into groups that cannot cohere.

WHY SPECIAL FORCES EXIST

Throughout history, specially organized guerrilla and counter-guerrilla forces have been invented, reinvented, and deployed. We find examples in the Peninsular War, the American Civil War, the Boer War, most colonial wars, and many anti-imperialist struggles. Yet, despite widely popularized exemplars like T. E. Lawrence in the First World War and Orde Wingate in World War II,

most American SOF units trace their history only as far back as the First Special Service Force (or, in the case of Navy SEALs, to the Underwater Demolition Teams).

To a greater extent than the official lineages suggest, the U.S. borrowed heavily from British organizational designs, while General Colin Gubbins himself is said to have patterned aspects of the SOE after the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and David Stirling, founder of the SAS, followed Rommel's lead. In addition, the British had hundreds of years' experience with small wars on which to draw, and that is exactly what World War II turned out to be at the local level: a series of localized small, but total, wars. Not only was each of these wars considered total by those who were conquered – whether in Burma, Slovenia, Serbia, or France – but the only reasonable means by which to resist foreign rule turned out to be through classic guerrilla techniques. Thus, the role of US special operators during World War II was generally to assist, coordinate, supply, liaise, and act like locals. As the SF motto proclaims, the aim was, literally, "to free the oppressed", or at least to help the oppressed free themselves.

As far as the Allied commanders were concerned, the oppressors were Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. But from the perspective of many non-Europeans, their oppressors included the British (in places like India and Palestine), the French (in Indochina), and even the Americans (in the Philippines). In fact, one thing that World War II did was ignite, inspire, and inflame liberation struggles the world over. By definition, these, too, had to be insurgent/guerrilla affairs. Actually, World War II proved to be a watershed in three senses: it killed colonialism, led to a cold war, and introduced what has since proved to be an anti-conquest age.

Histories of modern warfare tend to focus on the fact that as the hot war ended and the Cold War began, the superpowers sought to divide the world. Given the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the ever-present threat of mutual assured destruction, the dynamics of conflict *had* to change. Not only would it be safer if conflict took place in third-party countries, but countries once or twice removed from the first and second worlds proved doubly desirable, since this is where anti-colonial wars of liberation were already being waged.

These sorts of prolonged, asymmetric conflicts were right up SF's alley. SF could expand beyond simply training to coordinate resistance in Europe should World War III break out. In the face of what was described as worldwide communist aggression, the U.S. and other western countries needed a professionalized military force able to respond and to further American/western aims in low-intensity conflict anywhere. But, we should wonder, was it really only the Cold War that justified SF's existence? Or was there a shift in attitudes toward war and the aims of war in general?

It turns out that, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947, for the first time in history, military subjugation of a foreign population – that is, conquering foreign territory and forcing the conquered to

labour on behalf of the conquerors – was no longer to be tolerated. Anti-colonialism came to mean no overt imperialism, which came to mean no conquest. Although the Soviets and Chinese managed to get away with major seizures of land and people in the messy aftermath of the Second World War, no one else has been allowed to follow suit without facing sanctions or military force.

As much of a break with the past as this represents, however, all it has really meant for many political and military entrepreneurs is that they have had to find new ways to achieve the same ends. No longer being able to conquer someone else's territory to acquire more power or resources has not meant that they cannot cannibalize their own. Consider ethnic cleansing. Leaders (and aspiring leaders) can right wrongs, gain more territory, or liberate more resources simply by getting rid of people from within their own borders. Ethnic cleansing has proven effective partly because it is locally easy and convenient, but also because the international community has not yet figured out how to react to, let alone preempt, forced depopulations.

Cleansing hardly constitutes conventional warfare. Those bent on depopulation do not use conventional techniques. They do not need a conventional military armed with sophisticated, expensive weaponry – as Hutu *génocidaires* proved so graphically in Rwanda. Nor do expensive conventional weapons stop the infliction of terror on the ground or necessarily save lives, as we saw with the NATO air campaign over Serbia. In other words, although a handful of conventional wars have been provoked by conventional land-grabs (e.g., over Israel, in the Falklands, between Iran and Iraq, in the Gulf, along the Ethiopian-Eritrean border), most fighting since World War II has been far less amenable to conventional military solutions than has generally been acknowledged. Decades-long campaigns waged by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), the IRA, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka seem to be cases in point. Indeed, if we re-examine conflicts waged during the Cold War, it quickly becomes apparent that, despite all the rhetoric, most were nationalist in nature, only cloaked in superpower-inspired rhetoric. If struggles had been solely between communists and democrats or between Marxists and capitalists, the superpowers would have been able to win by proxy more often. Yet they never did so unequivocally.

Hindsight alone should thus suggest that for the past five decades, and not just since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, we have been living in a world in which most of the military forces we have are not suitable for fighting the only kinds of wars much of the rest of the world can afford to fight and is adept at fighting. And the rest of the world has learned that we will too often let people continue to fight so long as they do not directly target us.

Asymmetric warfare, it must be said, is hardly new. Yet, for a host of reasons, SOF has almost never been allowed to direct asymmetric wars themselves. Instead, SOF units get attached to, come under the command of, and report to conventional command structures. Even at the outset of the War on Terrorism, SOF's own commanders turned down the opportunity to be the

supported rather than the supporting command. Ever since, it has been largely conventional army tactics that have held sway in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This is unfortunate because, according to Thomas Adams in his history of Special Forces, SF teams had marked successes in the past, even achieving a number of victories in Vietnam. Those successes, however, served only to convince conventional leaders that if they just super-sized the US effort, the U.S. would prevail. By contrast, the U.S. never conventionalized its involvement in El Salvador. The US army was also required to keep its presence to a minimum. Advisors who served there credit both factors for their success. But rethinking US military involvement over the past 50 years may identify a third reason for the success of American advisors in El Salvador (and failure in Vietnam): the U.S. has consistently done better when American soldiers advise others in dirty wars; we fare far worse when we serve as combatants ourselves.

The most obvious explanation for this is that locals have to "own" the war for it to be won. Otherwise, whatever war the U.S. wages, the U.S. overwhelms; it becomes an American war in someone else's country. In a post-colonial/post-conquest age, such crusades can lead only to failure. But it also turns out that what is most often required in dirty wars is that the fighting be cleaned up, the local military professionalized, and civilian grievances addressed if the U.S. and whoever it is supporting hope to beat guerrillas and insurgents at their own game. In such cases, it can help only if advisors do not compromise their own integrity by engaging in the very practices they are there to help change.

SF is the only US military unit that specializes in such advising, and although it has shifted from an organization geared to engaging in unconventional warfare to one that has more often deployed to help counter, rather than raise, guerrilla forces, the essentials involved in advising have not really changed over time. Even more to the point, although the scale, scope, and aims of conflict may have evolved, men and the things they are capable of doing to one another do not. The latter are really what SF (and SOF in general) are designed to counter.

WHAT MAKES SPECIAL FORCES WORK

From the outset, at least three things have set Special Forces apart from conventional military units. The first is what SF soldiers train to do: fight as guerrillas or as counter-guerrillas, train others to do the same and, ideally, train others so that dirty wars need not be fought. The second is who is selected for SF. The third is SF's organization into teams or Operational Detachments Alpha (ODAs). Comprised of 12 men (a captain, chief warrant officer, team sergeant, assistant team sergeant, two medics, two engineers, two weapons, and two communications sergeants), a team is small enough to act with stealth, speed, and agility – the hallmarks of direct-action missions – while remaining self-contained, self-reliant, and self-sufficient for indefinite

periods of time. This is absolutely essential in a post-colonial/post-conquest age, when struggles can be protracted, when finesse counts for more than sheer raw force, and when singular direct-action missions rarely (if ever) suffice.

The sociological genius of teams resides in the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, while a team's small size allows everyone to always feel part of that whole. Thanks to the underlying structure, teams also imply equality, despite the presence of a clear-cut hierarchy. An outsider walking into a team room, if it belongs to a good team, should not be able to tell who outranks whom and should never see rank being pulled. Everyone should not only know what to do without being told but should be doing it without needing to be told. All teams aren't automatically good teams: no matter how structurally smart SF's design, there is no way to mandate that team members will get along. That is why selection – and who is chosen for SF – is so critical.

Something striking about the US military, and SF (as well as other SOF units) in particular, is that they tend to select out, not in. Unless there is a classified method that no one is allowed to discuss, it is impossible for SOF psychologists to accurately predict who will make it through Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) or the Qualification (Q) course, let alone who will make it as a good operator. What those doing the selecting must try to assess is who, given concerns that pop up on their tests, should *not* be admitted for training, let alone sent to a team. As a screening method, SFAS and, to a lesser extent, the Q Course are designed to determine who does not fit, who is not carrying his weight, who does not get along, who cannot roll with the punches, handle the unexpected, or deal in the grey.

The implication of this is that no profile of a SOF operator can possibly exist. If one did, everyone could simply be tested against it, and there would be no need to measure individuals against one another or by those who have already served on teams. The division of labour on teams also signals as much. Not only is there no single set of characteristics that all team members have to have, but there is no singular set any one individual *could* have.

Yet, having made it through the selection process, everyone presumably has something in common. Is it only the fact that they made it through? For Navy SEALs, even more than for SF soldiers, this would seem to be the case. Only classified and special-mission units are more selective than the SEALs, and they often hand-pick their members. Navy Special Warfare Command, in contrast, lets the ocean do the choosing. Relentless exposure to frigid water, grinding sand, and blind swims separates those candidates who will tolerate such extremes from those who would rather not. Any SEAL can thus be sure that every other SEAL has proved his worth in the water. In this regard, Basic Underwater Demolition/SEALs training (BUD/S) tests ability rather than potential. Also, because SEALs train primarily for direct-action missions, mutual acceptance can be further secured through training, where it is easy to demonstrate requisite skills and readiness.

If we compare the skill sets of SEALs with those required of Special Forces soldiers, what often matters to SF teams – that is, the ability to estab-

lish long-lasting rapport or to appear at ease in the face of radically different cultures – is not only harder to judge in training, but may not be directly transferable from one region of the world to the next. Yet, in general, Special Forces selection, like BUD/S, tests and evaluates for two sets of abilities: to adapt (who can get along) and to focus (who can concentrate on a problem until it is solved). Individuals must be able to dig deep, think quickly, jump on an opportunity, and avoid creating an incident. This presumes guts and wits, as well as maturity.

Given the pressures to perform, the most important common denominator, albeit one not overtly tested for, may be the ability to compartmentalize. Compartmentalization allows team members to be completely situational in their responses, which is what is called for in an unconventional, fluid, or volatile environment. And it is also what is called for when men are required to work together in unrelentingly intimate and often trying conditions for unspecified lengths of time. Both are hallmarks of Special Forces units.

Can people be *taught* to compartmentalize? This is like asking whether humans can be trained to be flexible or whether the military can teach individuals to think unconventionally. Tellingly, when posed the latter question in a classroom setting, SEAL lieutenants and lieutenant-commanders invariably shake their heads "no". So do many Special Forces captains and majors, while officers from conventional units often disagree, with Marines usually arguing most vociferously of all that, yes, it is possible to train people to think unconventionally. Just asking this question and eliciting this (or any) range of answers thus exposes radically different readings of others' potential, suggesting that *potential* as a criterion for acceptance may be problematical. Meanwhile, the written accounts of those who have engaged in unconventional operations suggest that people either can think unconventionally or not, but that anyone who says it is possible to *train* someone to be flexible should never be put in a position where he might try.

Being able to think – and act – "outside the box" is not all that Special Forces teamwork demands. Two corollary requirements bring us back to compartmentalization. Operators must have a conscience, although not one that will paralyze them in the midst of a mission. They must be able to recognize what is wrong, unethical, and immoral before choosing their course of action. They can agonize afterwards (as T. E. Lawrence did), but not at the time. Second, the ability to emotionally attach and detach as situations dictate applies equally to life inside the team room. Individuals have to be able to get along and they have to be able to conform to one another situationally, or the team will not cohere. Although often treated as a by-product or afterthought, cohesion is an absolute necessity. Yet, attaining cohesion should require no effort and demand no work.

A WORD ABOUT COHESION

Actually, cohesion is more paradoxical than it may at first appear. On the one hand, nothing is more important to the integrity of a team. But just as no one

can say for sure who belongs in Special Forces (only who does not), it is equally difficult, if not impossible, to predict what will cause a team to gel – and for the same reasons: no two teams share the same make-up. They cannot. Each is comprised of as many as 12 different personalities, whose fit is completely chemical. How – and whether – bonding is achieved depends entirely on how individuals get along at the inter-personal level. Not only are personal friendships and enmities among the most difficult relationships to explain or regulate, but the military cannot possibly screen for, or completely squelch, likes and dislikes that are generated only once people meet. At best, all any military organization can do is create and simulate conditions that force people to try to get along, then hope that solidarity crystallizes out of this.

Combat creates what are probably the strongest bonds men know. But other shared experiences, such as hardship, danger, miserable conditions, and achieving group success, can also foster cohesion. Nor can it be considered a coincidence that in simulated combat conditions military training itself can boost (or wreck) morale. Training may be intended to inculcate tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). But it also serves to stress-test individuals every time they practice TTP in a group. Anyone who has spent time with groups under pressure knows that differences of opinion about how best to cope with difficulties and challenges can themselves lead to or reveal irreparable rifts. Better, then, to discover problems before rather than after a unit is deployed, even though the fact that this is even a concern means that solidarity is *never* a sure thing.

Again, no matter what the military does, it cannot ensure cohesion; the most it can do is afford units the opportunity to achieve this themselves. In point of fact, what social scientists think might make men stick together turns out to be far less certain than the factor that those who have spent any time in groups know undermines cohesiveness. For teams, this is anything that causes doubt on the part of some about the “trustworthiness” of others; anything that causes some to question the skills, strength, speed, or stamina of others; anything that erodes or subverts the one-for-all, all-for-one ethos. Because teams, even more than other combat units, are predicated on complementarity and unquestionable mutual trust, the primary commitment of team members must be to group over self. Everyone shares in whatever responsibilities, dangers, and rewards there are. If, for instance, there is food to be had, everyone eats. The same goes for any creature comfort.

Although teams require that all members routinely think in terms of the group’s well-being and not of themselves, “think” may not be quite the right term. Having to stop to think, just the hint that strategizing has been done, suggests self-interest and calculation. The potential for envy, frustration, impatience, inequity, and disgust lurks whenever humans interact. When the sources for these reside within the team, the team has no escape; tensions will build, and the team will rip itself apart. Anything that might lead some to question the motives of others is thus subversive. So are cliques and exclusive relationships.

This is why no team can afford to have team members lusting after one another, let alone in love. Love rearranges loyalties. Lust, love, or anything that is binary enough to bind one pair of individuals more closely to one another than to anyone else means the focus of the group’s well-being shrinks to those two. Just the intimation that two out of six or ten or twelve individuals have found or are on the verge of finding everything they need in one another short-circuits the team’s collective purpose, which is to return to loved ones, to comfort, and to safety as a group, *only after* the mission is complete. With lovers (or even just potential lovers) present, priorities cannot remain the same for everyone.

In other words, barring the day when teams can be (re)engineered so that they revolve around dyads (as may be possible, and necessary, for certain urban and deep-cover operations), it makes no sense to mix men and women, or homosexuals, on teams. To put it most bluntly, the prospect of sexual intimacy is just too attractive to allow heterosexual men and women, or homosexuals, to serve together when other forms of intimacy are already a given. Indeed, as has been proven time and again, not even the most severe punishments, never mind strict standards, prevent inappropriate relations from occurring. If these did work, adultery would have been abandoned long ago. Forbidding sexual relations may even worsen their collective effect because that leaves a couple little choice but to be secretive. Secretive behaviour would only raise suspicions on a team. From suspicions it is but a short slide to doubt and mistrust.

Again, not only does the one-for-all, all-for-one ethos have to be paramount, but the presumed equivalence of everyone on the team has to be borne out in reality. This is why affirmative action – that which specifically *selects* in members of under-represented groups – must also be avoided at all costs. By definition, any attempt to preferentially admit members of certain groups renders the selection process less selective. Even when affirmative action does not explicitly select in an all-too-obvious way, some change in standards generally occurs. Test scores may be lowered or requirements waived to allow the admittance of those whose entry is being sought. The problem with this is that it raises questions in the minds of others, not only about *why* the standards have changed, or *why* they *had* to be changed, but also about the capabilities of all individuals who happen to belong to under-represented groups.

Just consider the effects of gender-norming in non-combat units, where the best women have felt the need to outdo men in order to prove themselves equally worthy. This is nothing compared to the consequences of affirmative action, which are far more pernicious. This is partly because inter-racial discussions about race tend to be far more constrained than discussions that focus on the differences between the sexes, but also because it is not just physical fitness tests that have been modified. Intelligence test scores have likewise been lowered. Notwithstanding that white males who score just above the cutoff point on aptitude tests likewise benefit, they are not the ones whose performance is doubted from the outset. They are not the ones who will be regarded as members of less capable groups first and as only *potentially* exceptional individuals second.

This is where the Navy SEALs' BUD/S as a selection model is again instructive. Because BUD/S tests individuals according to objective criteria that all SEALs respect, it leaves no room for doubt about whether an individual *can* do X or Y. It certainly does not raise more questions than it can answer, which is precisely what changes to the Special Forces' selection process are likely to do. As Special Forces move to an assessment and selection process in which candidates are chosen by assessors because they appear to have potential, versus proven abilities, no one on a team is likely to feel he can be sure of others' worth until the team has spent months in the woods together or has been deployed multiple times – if the team can be kept together that long.

The strength of Special Forces depends not just on their personnel, and who is selected, but on how easily those who are selected will get along. To ensure mutual trust, there must be mutual confidence. The only way to secure this is to avoid selecting individuals about whom nagging questions can be raised. Therefore, the politically incorrect but operationally necessary policies must be no women, no gays, and no affirmative action.

OTHER TENSIONS

Attracting and retaining recruits has periodically posed a challenge for Special Forces, although what candidates think they are joining to do can also cause tensions within teams. Prior to September 11, SOF units in general often competed with other entities, like the Marine Corps, for various categories of mission. SOF units also competed among themselves. On the one hand, a certain amount of overlap or redundancy is always healthy. On the other, should Navy SEALs act as advisors in non-watery environments? Should every Army Special Forces company have a scuba-qualified team?

Even before the war on terrorism, one source of disagreement within Special Forces had to do with teams' primary focus. Should this be Direct Action (DA) or Foreign Internal Defense (FID)? Door-kicking or well-digging? Invariably, different commanding officers favoured one over the other, as they still do. Yet each category of mission not only emphasizes different skill sets but appeals to different types. For instance, ambushes, raids, and other DA operations are quick, clean (when they are successful), and "military" in execution. Training foreign forces, in contrast, tends to be slow and messy, and demands diplomacy and tact. To do DA well requires physical vigour, thus favouring youth; FID calls for maturity. Soldiers are wound tight for DA; patience isn't just a virtue but a necessity for FID. DA means practice, practice, practice until responses are automatic; FID can work only when soldiers can think on their feet, have some cultural knowledge, and feel some amount of empathy for the local population.

Which skill set and which personality type do real-world missions call for? If we are honest, we have to answer "both". But in one package or separate

packages? Does every individual need to be able to span this range? Or can teams include individuals at both ends of the spectrum? Alternatively, would it make more sense to separate those with different affinities into different teams? Questions such as these are bound to haunt Special Forces in the future as commanders continue to sell SF soldiers as "jacks of all trades, masters of none."

Technology, particularly information technology, represents a second and not unrelated point of tension. Although it may make no sense to base a country's security on something that cannot be made secure, namely computers, the military's dependence on information technology continues to grow. All indicators suggest that SOF, too, will become increasingly wired. Consequently, two potential problems loom. There will be an increasing need for what those who disparage them would call "techno-geeks" – people who know how to operate and repair increasingly sophisticated equipment. At the moment, Special Forces (and SOF in general) still attract men who are able to survive by their wits, out in the woods, with no hand-held global positioning devices, let alone Internet access. Are techno-geeks and survivalists compatible?

A second tension arises from technology. Are primitive survival skills, such as knowing how to send signals in Morse code, going to be outmoded and discontinued, as is already being discussed? If so, and if sophisticated technological approaches come to be emphasized at the expense of low-technology skills, SOF will have built into itself a whole new vulnerability. One would think that the rule of thumb for any combat unit would be to have with it the most foolproof, reliable, dependable equipment there is, in addition to whatever sophisticated equipment might help. Never mind the practical reasons for having a simple back-up; just knowing that the team knows how to make do with no special resources can stave off fear and doubt. Doubt, remember, is corrosive. It corrodes confidence, and it undermines cohesion.

Does this distinction between sophisticated technology and simple self-sufficiency really represent a divide, or is it better thought of as a continuum? It may be too soon to say. Nevertheless, these questions should at the very least remind us once again that the one thing we cannot ignore is that human nature and the limits to human sociability remain every military unit's ultimate constraint and perpetual challenge.

Shelves full of books have been written about just how wonderfully flexible and impressively adaptable we humans are when it comes to change. However, the fact that wars and conflicts continue to occur should indicate that people *do not* always accede to changes in acceptable or predictable ways. Indeed, there seem to be two consistent threads running through history: we humans have a tremendous capacity for base acts and noble deeds. Not surprisingly, both are social products. Both depend on the temper and tone of groups. Thus, we would do well to remember that group dynamics explain the ability of teams to curb, prevent, and reverse what group dynamics can likewise spawn: man's inhumanity to man. Chemistry counts, even if not always in the ways we would most like.

CONCLUSIONS

Not many years ago, at a conference held at the United States Military Academy at West Point, I heard an army surgeon wax enthusiastic about the promise that the Human Genome Project holds for the army. His prediction was that a better understanding of the human make-up will soon enable researchers to determine the "who" and the "what" of the Super Soldier. But even if he is correct, and bio-engineers will be able to make a Super Soldier, will they be able to make Super Cohesion too? My guess is no.

Even when we consider the social unit that has undergone probably more change than any other in the last half-century – the family – how much has really, profoundly changed? Sources of tension have clearly shifted, along with the division of labour, but tensions still exist. There is still a minuet between the sexes, even if our great-grandparents wouldn't recognize the subjects of today's negotiations. Without question, changing gender roles have affected team life. When both husbands and wives expect fathers to spend more time with their children, team members have less time (and are arguably less inclined) to socialize with team-mates after hours. Given the intense amounts of time team members already spend with one another, this might not matter. But where it may be having an effect is in father-child attachments. The more time fathers spend with their children, the more time they may want to spend with them, although arguably the reverse could be equally true (but just can't be voiced).

From almost any perspective, it seems safe to say that what families expect of males today is clearly not what was expected of males in previous generations. But is what males expect of other males any different than it has ever been? The latter is the question that, while deserving more attention, receives none. Nor is it likely to, since the obvious answer – no – flies in the face of conventional notions about progress.

Without question, it would appear that Western societies have steadily moved toward more complexity, greater sophistication, and an enhanced sensitivity to others across the board. This is certainly the case if we consider armaments, which now run the gamut from nuclear to non-lethal, but even if we take into account what is or is not considered permissible in war, less is permissible. However, this does not mean that others are not doing diabolical things. To take just one example, in the Sudan and Uganda in the 1980s, orphans were being used as soldiers. By the 1990s in Liberia and Sierra Leone, children were being orphaned to turn them into soldiers. One could argue that, in a twisted sense, this too represents progress. As citizens of the world, it rightly appeals us. But have we stopped it? Have we exhibited the will even to try?

Once we pose questions such as these, it is less clear how much has changed in the realm of human interactions, or how much will, whether in the international arena in which SOF units operate or in the team rooms where they prepare. Do Special Forces soldiers really have any new techniques to

bring to bear? Yes, they may carry faster-acting, more powerful drugs and more powerful, better-encrypting radios. But taken together, would these or any of the other things found in SOF's current repertoire help a team alter the dynamics on the ground in any appreciably different way than a team could have done 30 years ago? Do any of SOF's latest acquisitions add to the wits, guts, or maturity of team members or to their ability to conform to situations? Presuming that individuals with the best attributes are those who are being selected for SF in the first place, is there anything that could?

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