



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician assigned to Commander, Task Group 56.1, explains underwater navigation system to Kuwait naval force technicians during training evolution as part of exercise Eager Response 18, Mohammed Al-Ahmad Naval Base, Kuwait, January 8, 2018 (U.S. Navy/Louis Rojas)

# The By-With-Through Operational Approach

By Joseph L. Votel and Eero R. Keravuori

*Our approach is by, with, and through our Allies, so that they own these spaces and the U.S. does not.*

—SECRETARY JAMES N. MATTIS

The U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) definition of the *by-with-through* (BWT) *operational approach* is that operations are led *by* our partners, state or nonstate, *with* enabling support from the United States or U.S.-led coalitions, and

*through* U.S. authorities and partner agreements. By, with, and through has proved agile, adaptive, and tailorable in pursuing American interests in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility (AOR). Moreover, this approach will become increasingly useful *globally* in a complex, resource-constrained environment with advantages from use before, during, and after conflict. The U.S. military must organize, resource, and train the joint force to operate by, with, and through with greater efficiency and effectiveness with various types of partners and whole-of-government involvement. Executing this approach in current and future multipolar and resource-constrained environments requires common understanding and the development of joint force doctrine.

## Overview

Regional conflicts can arise when state or nonstate actors do not have the capacity and resources to resolve their

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conflicts locally, potentially putting U.S. interests in the region at risk. Traditional U.S. military solutions can inhibit local responsibility for resolving those problems and may even provide opportunities for adversaries to challenge and reverse the legitimacy of “foreign power” solutions. Also, despite an invitation of the host government, a large and protracted U.S. military presence is often perceived as an invasion or an occupation by significant numbers of the host-country’s citizens. Aware of these challenges, Secretary of Defense James Mattis stated, “U.S. forces have evolved to work by, with, and through our allies”<sup>1</sup> and would defeat the so-called Islamic State (IS) “by, with, and through other nations.”<sup>2</sup> The current USCENTCOM *Theater Strategy* states, “‘by, with and through’ is an important component of our strategic approach,”<sup>3</sup> and “we choose to prevail ‘by, with and through’ . . . nations that share our interests.”<sup>4</sup>

As this approach gains increasing usage, it is important to address what it entails and its implications for the joint force. The phrase has many potential interpretations; therefore, along with the definition above, a conceptual framing of its meaning is necessary. The BWT operational approach seeks to achieve U.S. national interests by engaging and enabling partners’ local and regional capabilities and leadership. Through American authorities and partner agreements, joint force enablers can support, organize, train, equip, build/rebuild, and advise partners’ security forces and their supporting institutions from the tactical to ministerial levels.

By, with, and through is not yet a doctrine or a strategy or a formal military program. Instead, it is considered an operational approach to be used during the course of security cooperation activities or military campaigns. The approach pursues more culturally acceptable and durable solutions by developing and supporting partner participation and operational ownership. By, with, and through is a way of conducting military activities and operations with less direct combat employment of U.S. forces.

Although for USCENTCOM it is militarily focused, by, with, and through complements the whole-of-government approach to regional conflicts that implicate U.S. national interests.

With this definition and broad concept, the discussion is presented in two parts. In the first part, several USCENTCOM examples are discussed to develop a better understanding of the BWT approach. These examples assist the explanation of essential components in decisions on where, when, with whom, and how the BWT approach is used. Based on USCENTCOM experience, the second part identifies strategic and operational selection criteria, advantages, and risks that must be considered at the onset and reassessed throughout execution. Ultimately, how this approach impacts the joint force and considerations for current and future doctrine and readiness are presented.

### The USCENTCOM AOR

Current examples in the USCENTCOM AOR of BWT operational approaches include:

- Multilayered approach to counterterrorism in Yemen
- U.S. Forces–Afghanistan’s Operation *Freedom’s Sentinel* (OFS)
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Operation *Resolute Support* (ORS) in Afghanistan
- Operation *Inherent Resolve* (OIR) in the campaign against IS.

After several interviews and discussions with the leadership involved in these operations, the recognized value of a BWT operational approach is consistent, as are some of the concerns. The composition and application of U.S. support to each of these conflicts are not identical. In each, U.S. force structure and employment reflect the agile and tailorable nature of a BWT approach and illustrate the unique challenges that develop in the various conflicts.

**Yemen.** Before exploring larger scale efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, it is worth exploring the operational approach supporting counterterrorism

in Yemen. The BWT approach in this case is a hybrid or multilayered example involving a stable ally as the regional partner, who in turn is enabling a local partner in Yemen. This is also an example of using the BWT operational approach in support of aligned regional interests: countering al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Specifically, the United States contributes counterterrorism advising, intelligence, and logistics capabilities to the UAE as part of an Arab coalition targeting AQAP in Yemen.<sup>5</sup> In an additional layer, U.S. military support enables UAE, with its greater cultural, historical, and tribal knowledge, in its own BWT approach to enhance the capabilities of local Yemeni counterterrorism forces in the common fight against AQAP.<sup>6</sup> Supporting allied missions by, with, and through our regional partners is one way to secure common interests and share responsibility and resource burdens. Furthermore, it exemplifies how the joint force could use the approach to reassure and strengthen existing alliances and deepen interoperability as envisioned in the 2018 National Defense Strategy.<sup>7</sup>

**Afghanistan.** Contrastingly, the Afghanistan mission gradually evolved into a BWT approach as recognition of the need for domestic legitimacy and ownership increased. In 2001, the United States entered Afghanistan to destroy al Qaeda and defeat the Taliban without an accurate appreciation for the Afghans’ capacity to retain these gains.<sup>8</sup> General Stanley McChrystal, USA (Ret.), reflected that in Afghanistan, as in Vietnam, the adversary was able to ratchet up and down both the size and composition of its forces to counter U.S. strengths. The U.S. military was employing greater numbers of conventional forces and gaining increasing ownership of the problem.<sup>9</sup> In Afghanistan, this cycle culminated with the conclusion of Operation *Enduring Freedom* and the start of OFS and ORS, both taking a BWT approach to the problem.

ORS is established under a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the Afghanistan government and NATO. The SOFA authorizes NATO forces to provide noncombat training, advising,

and assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2189, welcoming ORS as an expression of the international commitment to Afghanistan stability and the financial sustainment of the ANDSF through 2020.<sup>11</sup> The execution of the current BWT approach in support of the ANDSF fosters domestic legitimacy and ownership of Afghan security by its indigenous security institutions and bolsters international legitimacy for the mission.

Even so, in 2016 and 2017, it was recognized that the mission and ANDSF were still facing challenges in maintaining consistent progress against the Taliban. Several of the commanders we interviewed, with multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, noted that the limited military progress of a BWT approach was not based on the method but on the means. The preponderance of USCENTCOM enablers were committed to the priority mission in Iraq and Syria, and the mission in Afghanistan was conducted as an economy of force.<sup>12</sup> Senior leaders determined that, in order to achieve more durable operational success, advisor teams were needed at lower headquarters echelons of the ANDSDF. While defeating the IS remained the priority, there were not more advising and enabling forces for the Afghanistan mission. Additionally, the SOFA initially limited advising to the ANDSF corps or corps-equivalent level.<sup>13</sup> In a unilateral approach, the change in advising levels would simply be a subject of resource availability. In a BWT approach that included a host-nation partner and broad coalition of NATO Allies and partners, additional negotiation to modify the NATO and U.S. bilateral agreements with Afghanistan, and revision of coalition governments' commitments to ORS, were necessary preconditions to increase advising and enabling resources.

The BWT operational approach is adaptive to evolving operational and tactical conditions as well as the partner's capabilities and limitations. In Iraq, U.S. and coalition forces had reevaluated the location and echelon of their support. The result was the transition from static

forward operating base advise-and-assist programs to expeditionary advising programs that accompanied Iraqi Security Forces into its operations to liberate Iraqi territory. Similarly, U.S. and coalition special operations forces (SOF) in Syria operated near the forward line of troops with the partner unit of action. In Iraq, force-protection concerns initially limited the influence that our enablers could provide.<sup>14</sup> It is now recognized that partnering at the right level with the unit of action creates better use and influence from the enabling assets.

In the USCENTCOM AOR, this is often, but not always, at the brigade level. Advising with a broader set of expertise and down to the *kandak* (battalion) level in Afghanistan will be the third evolution of this lesson, integrating the support into echelons closer to the unit of action to create even more proficiency and efficiency from a BWT approach. The impending military defeat of IS in Iraq and Syria, and the subsequent availability of enabling capabilities, allows for prioritizing resource increases in Afghanistan. With increased enabling resources at lower levels, the Afghanistan operational realignment aims to further capitalize on the BWT approach and help the ANDSF better secure the gains on the ground.

**OIR.** While U.S. involvement in Iraq started in a similar way to Afghanistan, the operation against IS represents a distinct change from the preceding operations. The BWT approach included ground combat by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) supported by a 60-country U.S.-led coalition. The coalition role included building partner capacity for ground combat and advise, assist, accompany, and enable missions. Additionally, coalition fires and precision airstrikes targeted all aspects of IS leadership, formations, infrastructure, and resources. Backing all this was joint sustainment, communication, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance forces and assets.

**Iraq.** In Iraq, with the U.S. announcement of OIR in 2014, the United States also announced that the coalition there would be supporting, not directing, operational objectives. This was a

significant change from the previous military involvement. As Brigadier General John Richardson points out, in 2008 the U.S. military was still telling the Iraqi military what to do and when to do it, even when the Iraqis were the lead element. Although the United States and its coalition partners were building ISF capacity, their ownership of the conflict was inhibited by our lack of tactical patience to let them lead.<sup>15</sup> Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend further notes that in 2007, the Iraqis did not ask for the surge of U.S. troops to fight the insurgency. In 2014, by comparison, the Iraqi government asked the world for help. The difference in operational success, Lieutenant General Townsend states, was not in ISF capability from 2007 to 2014. No Iraqi unit was fully manned, equipped, or trained in 2014, but in marked contrast with the Iraqi units of 2007, many units partnered with U.S.-coalition enablers were now fully willing to fight.<sup>16</sup> The alignment of interest, their confidence in our support, and the investment of the host nation have been key to this change.

Iraq also serves as an example that the BWT approach is not inexpensive and not necessarily less resource-intensive regarding enabling support than a comparable unilateral action undertaken by the U.S. joint force. The capacity of the partner and type and stage of conflict determine the enabling resource requirements. Operations like Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan, however, require a sufficient level of resources for the problem to both provide the partner an operational advantage and sustain it until conflict termination. Thus, the appropriate mix and availability from a large spectrum of enablers including airpower, artillery, intelligence, cyber, and sustainment, as well as possible civil, infrastructure, and humanitarian capacities, need to be considered before taking a BWT operational approach.<sup>17</sup> In supporting the ISF joint force, the cost included persistent overwhelming support from all those capabilities in higher levels to compensate for the developing ground force capabilities and longer operational timelines. The resourcing cost was high, but considered acceptable given the increased partner



Iraqi soldier assigned to 7<sup>th</sup> Iraqi army division participates in assault movement training at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, January 13, 2017, as part of Combined Joint Task Force—Operation *Inherent Resolve* (U.S. Army/Lisa Soy)

confidence, ownership, and success and the much-diminished risk of U.S. casualties.

Just as the partnerships may need initial robust support as in Iraq, or right-sizing increases in U.S. and coalition advisor teams as in Afghanistan, there can also be a transition to decreased numbers. As mentioned, with the military successes in Iraq, the need for U.S. forces partnering below the division level is diminishing.<sup>18</sup> Compared to Operation *Iraqi Freedom* and Operation *Enduring Freedom* missions that debated the amount and length of U.S. force presence needed for long-term stability, in OIR the domestic Iraqi forces are the hold, build, and stabilize forces that can remain indefinitely. As this continues, the transition from the BWT operational approach suggests evolving from a BWT partnership for a specific interest to a traditional

military-to-military partnership for a range of common interests.<sup>19</sup>

*Syria.* A significant difference in the BWT approach from Iraq to Syria is the availability of a host-nation state partner. The United States and its coalition partners determined that the Syrian regime was either unwilling or unable to prevent IS from launching attacks against Iraq, the United States, and its coalition partners from within Syrian territory. Because cooperation with the Syrian regime was politically untenable to the United States and its partners, the coalition had to turn to other actors on the Syrian civil war battlefield. The considerations of suitable partners having aligned interests meant differentiating those forces seeking U.S. assistance in the civil war from those willing to focus on defeating IS. Congress provided the executive branch the initial Syrian Train and Equip authorities,<sup>20</sup> allowing the military to start a transactional

relationship with moderate and vetted armed Syrian opposition groups that pledged to fight against IS rather than the Syrian regime. This difference—partnering with a nonstate armed group rather than a partner-nation's armed forces—required a different supporting force structure to enable the vetted Syrian opposition light infantry capabilities rather than Iraq's joint force capabilities. The lack of host-government support complicated logistical support and U.S. and coalition force protection, putting a greater reliance on SOF trainers and advisors, air support, and transfers of arms and equipment to the SDF.

While a BWT approach generates greater domestic legitimacy for the partner, the lack of U.S. short- and long-term operational control over the partner and its agenda can have strategic concerns. Partnering with the SDF, led largely by Syrian Kurds, created strategic stress with

Turkey, which is only magnified by the notion of SDF ownership versus U.S. control. It also presents an ongoing political challenge to the legitimacy for U.S. involvement from the Syrian regime and its partners.

In Syria, the partnership with the SDF is pragmatically focused on the defeat of IS. The SDF's legal status under international law and in juxtaposition to the Syrian regime limits the evolution of the partnership as compared with Iraq and the government's ISF. This is not meant to imply that future partnerships are not possible with nonstate groups like the SDF; rather it implies that these partnerships support distinct U.S. interests with appropriate authorities and policies. In Syria, the United States did not select a BWT approach simply to develop an indigenous partner. It did so because it was a more effective operational approach to degrade, defeat, and destroy IS in a country that the United States had no diplomatic relationship with.

**Host Legitimacy.** In all three cases, military gains made in support of U.S. interests are not secure if they rely solely on military partnership. As pointed out in *Building Armies, Building Nations*, the development and support of the military, and the resulting legitimacy through ownership and success in the conflict, are not sufficient by themselves for long-term nation-building or stability. The host-partner military needs development of its role as a bridge to a national identity.<sup>21</sup> This resonates with Secretary Mattis's assertion that the American example of military and civic leadership in shaping partners' views of social responsibility is as important as the technical proficiency.<sup>22</sup> To foster this potential, the whole-of-government participation in a BWT approach should be sought from the onset. According to Lieutenant General Terry Wolff, USA (Ret.), the hard-won legitimacy of the ISF and government of Iraq will not last in the liberated areas if they are not able to turn on the lights, get the water flowing, or open the schools in a popularly acceptable timeframe.<sup>23</sup>

**U.S. and International Interests.** Another factor existing in all of these

partnerships is the limited scope of military interest and the tenuous nature of the success. For instance, in Syria, the SDF faces uncertain domestic security due to political, ethnic, and historical tensions separate from IS. Military actions to address these sources of domestic SDF security exceed U.S. and coalition authorities, which are focused on the defeat of IS. This keeps the partnership transactional and risks a divergence of interests. In Iraq, internal domestic concerns, including Iranian influence and Kurdish autonomy, are reminders that the military BWT operational approach cannot overcome all of the domestic tensions or issues that may have led to or exacerbated the conditions that generated IS. There is also a need for interagency and international involvement on the ground. In Afghanistan, the competing pressures from Pakistan, Russia, and domestic power competitions are somewhat more balanced by a more robust international commitment. Governmental and international efforts need to join early on and follow through beyond the limited military role to diminish the risk posed by rogue or revisionist actors.

### Future Considerations

The BWT operational approach and the examples of its current employment in the USCENTCOM AOR reveal that it encompasses a spectrum of characteristics. One end of the spectrum is the realm of low-visibility advisory assistance by small teams, with limited enablers, partnering with small groups of indigenous actors like the counterterrorism support in Yemen. As the conflict intensifies, U.S. involvement becomes increasingly more overt. The supporting leadership mix shifts from unconventional warfare, irregular warfare, and counterterrorism experts to more counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and conventional offensive warfare units and leaders in increasing numbers, as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Also increasing with expanded U.S. involvement are the number of joint force resources like fires, intelligence, and sustainment. Finally, the degree of whole-of-govern-

ment involvement, as well as the size and nature of the partner up to the host country government, are considered.

**Domestic Concerns.** These concerns are paired with factors determined from the specific conflict situation, including the type and stage of the conflict or threat, availability of partners and their current contribution or capacity, and regional and international involvement.<sup>24</sup> An evaluation of the stage of conflict and the capacity of the partner assist in determining the appropriate type of activity required. This may include any range of operations from building partner capacity and security force assistance to counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense to offensive counterterrorism operations. This also provides clarity to the most constraining factor, which is the required supporting forces and sustainment levels needed to ensure the host partner's progress, parity, or overmatch—and ultimately secure the shared U.S. interest.

The U.S. national interests at stake are determinants of where the joint force operates along these spectra. These concerns center on the value of the endstate of the conflict to U.S. national interests and the immediacy required. When the United States is facing an existential threat, the BWT operational approach is not suitable due to its risks from partner, rather than U.S., ownership of the outcome.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, if there is a vital national interest regarding how and when the conflict is concluded, then by, with, and through may again not be recommended.<sup>26</sup>

Another factor is the level and leadership by the Armed Forces in consideration of the political sensitivity of U.S. involvement and the type of conflict. This factor helps define the intended visibility of the American role (from limited to overt), SOF and conventional force mixture, number and type of enablers, and extent of other U.S. agency involvement. In times of political constraint, providing only U.S. military supporting capabilities reduces the political tension of employing significant frontline combat forces. With effective leadership and support, this may allow addressing interests that would be less accessible through other approaches.



Marines with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force—Crisis Response—Central Command, conduct Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel exercise, October 8, 2016 (U.S. Marine Corps/Trever Statz)

**Leadership.** A significant advantage of a BWT operational approach is host-partner ownership and durable outcome supporting U.S. national interests. To achieve this outcome, a BWT approach requires a leadership actively engaged in sourcing and coordinating the enabling resources and advising as a trusted agent, while allowing host partners to control employment, timelines, and direction.<sup>27</sup> This type of supporting leadership from the United States leverages the capabilities that host nations have and the primary leadership they can contribute. This was the case in Iraq, where the Iraqis, with increasing confidence in committed support, selected other routes, objectives, and timelines of their own choosing rather than only those preferred by the United States. Accepting host state or nonstate leaders' ownership of the fight reveals the commitment and risk tolerance of host forces in meeting their own and U.S. interests. This is essential for legitimacy with the people, one of the shared advantages of a BWT approach, especially in counter-insurgency scenarios.<sup>28</sup>

Empowering the partner leadership in this way, however, creates risk to U.S. objectives and operational timelines.

The mitigating factors begin with first finding a willing and capable partner and ensuring aligned interests. Second is sustaining a committed, reliable, and durable supporting and enabling presence.<sup>29</sup> Through the provision of sound advice and reliable application of resources and enablers, the American leaders involved provide tangible value to the partner nation, thereby allowing the development of trust and influence on the alignment of interests.<sup>30</sup>

Having the right quality of leaders for this approach is essential. Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, USA, considers that leaders must first be experts in their field, whether that is direct action, fires, intelligence preparation of the battlefield, or sustainment, and also be comfortable in a mission command role without traditional mission control.<sup>31</sup> Those commanders interviewed contend that the experience in a supporting and advising role relied heavily on and complemented rather than degraded their primary wartime training. USCENTCOM Command Sergeant Major William Thetford, USA, noted that significant reliance on mission command and relationship-building in smaller

dispersed formations in the SFAB would also require high performing noncommissioned officers.<sup>32</sup>

Lieutenant General William Beydler, commander of Marine Corps Forces Central Command, commented that the 4-month Marine Expeditionary Unit rotation cycle approach does not match up with the importance of relationships.<sup>33</sup> A service force management process that allows a persistent unit alignment, as with SOF teams being sent back to the same location, as suggested by Special Operations Command Central Command Sergeant Major Marc Eckard, USA, is another possible way to address this challenge.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the naval perspective provided by U.S. Naval Forces Central Command commander Vice Admiral John Aquilino is that information-sharing in the maritime domain is possible, but it is much harder to advise and assist on someone else's bridge.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding leadership characteristics, Colonel Patrick Work's Mosul experience highlighted anticipation, agility, and inquisitiveness as traits that improved the support provided and the influence gained during this approach.<sup>36</sup> Training for these and other necessary characteristics like

historical context, language, and culture are more common for SOF, but are no less important when conventional forces are employed. This also includes the potential of focusing military leaders' careers on developing relationships with regional security partners and with regionally focused interagency counterparts. The force will also need to develop ways to reward this type of leader development.<sup>37</sup>

**Sustainment and Enablers.** Another area that impacts the success of the approach is sustainment of the host and the enablers. Lieutenant General Michael Garrett, U.S. Army Central commander, notes that, at equivalent levels, the sustainment force is not organized to support the broadly dispersed footprint of a Brigade Combat Team in this approach.<sup>38</sup> USCENTCOM's J4, Major General Edward Dorman, USA, commented that earlier involvement in sustainment partnerships needs consideration for operationally effective support, resource management, and longer term outcomes.<sup>39</sup>

The BWT approach is often mistaken for an inexpensive approach to warfare. This is a misperception. This approach still requires significant financial expenditure. Reducing the use of U.S. forces for direct combat operations creates less control of the timelines and decreased efficiency of resource expenditure. Therefore, the duration of the conflict and amount of resource consumption are potential strategic risks to joint force readiness in general and carry broader U.S. economic implications that must be mitigated. This requires continual vigilance of resource consumption, since, as the USCENTCOM J5, Major General George Smith, USMC, cautioned, trading tactical risks for strategic ones is not a viable long-term plan.<sup>40</sup>

The joint force can react and adapt to meet the needs of a BWT approach when there are limited competing requirements and the force is given enough time. Creating a sustained capability requires developing the requisite capacities within the components and a complementary joint doctrine. The Army SFAB and Field Manual 3-07.1, *Security Force Assistance*, provide a conceptual starting point for components for the advising role.

Lieutenant General Jeffrey Harrigian, the U.S. Air Force's Central Command commander, noted that an equivalent structure does not exist in the Air Force and that training an indigenous air force has significantly longer timelines.<sup>41</sup>

Another component of risk is the lethal threats to employed enablers. Enablers from the joint force may include sustainment and mobility; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and kinetic and nonlethal fires. These enablers allow our partners to sustain themselves in the conflict. When provided with American leadership and commitment, U.S. partners have demonstrated increased confidence and determination to prevail. While this often lowers the risk from employment of a comparable number of U.S. frontline ground combatants, the lethal risk to the various types of aircraft enablers, logistics operations, and advisers remains significant.<sup>42</sup>

In interviews and discussions, important considerations were voiced suggesting that adversaries will seek ways to adapt to and counter this approach. To begin, Lieutenant General Harrigian describes the enabling mission and associated decreased risk as relying on the assumption of air superiority, which is no longer a certainty.<sup>43</sup> It is in a contested air domain where adversary airpower may disrupt the supply lines or degrade other supporting forces' freedom of maneuver. Secretary Mattis takes a position in his *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* that every domain is now contested.<sup>44</sup> The joint force must factor in this state of domains with expected adaptations by adversaries to degrade the BWT approach and associated exposure to enablers.

**Authorities and Doctrine.** All of this requires the appropriate legal framework and authorities for partnering and resourcing. A major risk is that permanent statutory authorities do not exist to enable partner forces in this kind of conflict. Colonel Matthew Grant, USA, USCENTCOM Judge Advocate, expressed how specific legislation to provision regular and irregular forces in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan was required in each case—and the authorities in each instance were tailored to the particular

operational circumstances and congressional concerns. As the specific situation develops and support required changes, however, new or revised authorities may be necessary. Congress does not operate at the speed of war, creating a lag between need and the legislative solution. This presents a further requirement on commanders and planners to anticipate evolutions of enabling requirements and advocate early for the necessary authorities.

Further complicating this risk is the lack of joint doctrine supporting a BWT operational approach. There is need for doctrine concerning large-scale conventional forces conducting operations that include security force assistance; building partner capacity from the ministerial to tactical levels; and various mixes of train, advise, assist, accompany, and enable missions.<sup>45</sup>

With whom to partner our resources carries significant implications for the U.S. authorities granted, military requirements, securing U.S. interest, and endstate or transition. Ultimately, the partnerships in a BWT approach change when U.S. interests are secured or diverge from the partner's interest. The potential follow-on relationship depends on the nature of the partner, success of the partnership, and subsequent U.S. interests. Transition following from BWT partnerships augmenting stable ally states, such as the U.S. relationship with the UAE concerning Yemen, may be the most straightforward. Highly transactional relationships with nonstate actors remain the more challenging to transition without authorities or policies that follow through. Finally, all the examples of conflicts and partners require avoiding the development of dependencies and recognizing mission limitations and mission accomplishment.

## Concluding Imperative

The U.S. military has a significant role in securing and maintaining American national interests. The BWT operational approach identifies partners with specific shared interests, preferably held by them at an equal or higher national value. The U.S. joint force leverages

the partner's leadership and increases its capacity and ownership for greater legitimacy and durability of the outcome. This approach, done with the purpose of securing and maintaining U.S. and partner shared interests through shared responsibility and shared burdens, creates opportunities to strengthen allies and develop partnerships with future allies.

Current conflicts benefit from relatively long learning curves in Iraq and Afghanistan. This makes it more important for future conflicts, without the benefit of a decade of learning by experience, to capture the best practices and lessons learned for how the joint force successfully employs this approach.

To capitalize on this approach, the joint force must deliberately engage in developing doctrine for the partnering, resourcing, organizing, educating, training, and transitioning in a BWT operational approach. The integration of this approach with other military doctrine and interagency contributions needs effort as well. By, with, and through is a valuable addition and complement, not a replacement, to other tools in the joint force arsenal. Considering the environment laid out in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, the professional intellectual rigor spent to this end will have compounding positive impacts in developing a lethal, agile, and resilient force posture and employment. JFQ

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cheryl Pellerin, "Mattis Highlights Working By, With, Through Allies," *Defense.gov*, October 12, 2017, available at <[www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1340562/mattis-highlights-working-by-with-through-allies/](http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1340562/mattis-highlights-working-by-with-through-allies/)>.

<sup>2</sup> James N. Mattis, "Transcript: Defense Secretary James Mattis on 'Face the Nation,'" May 28, 2017, available at <[www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-defense-secretary-james-mattis-on-face-the-nation-may-28-2017/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-defense-secretary-james-mattis-on-face-the-nation-may-28-2017/)>.

<sup>3</sup> General Joseph L. Votel, USA, *Theater Strategy* (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: U.S. Central Command, November 22, 2016), 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *The United Arab Emirates (UAE): Issues for U.S. Policy*, RS21852 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 2, 2017), 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 9, available at <[www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf)>.

<sup>8</sup> General Stanley A. McChrystal, USA (Ret.), telephone interview by authors, October 31, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Status of NATO Forces and NATO Personnel Conducting Mutually Agreed NATO-Led Activities in Afghanistan* (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 30, 2014), available at <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_116072.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_116072.htm?selectedLocale=en)>.

<sup>11</sup> NATO, "Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan," November 10, 2017, available at <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_113694.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm)>.

<sup>12</sup> Brigadier General John B. Richardson IV, USA, commander, Train Advise Assist Command—East, Operation *Resolute Support*, telephone interview by authors, October 23, 2017; Colonel Scott W. Halstead, USA, director, Simon Center for the Professional Ethic, United States Military Academy, telephone interview by authors, November 1, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> *Agreement.*

<sup>14</sup> Colonel Brett G. Sylvia, USA, chief of staff, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, telephone interview by authors, November 5, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson.

<sup>16</sup> Lieutenant General Stephen J. Townsend, USA, commander, 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps, telephone interview by authors, November 8, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Colonel J. Patrick Work, USA, commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, telephone interview by authors, October 12, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Sylvia.

<sup>19</sup> Lieutenant General Terry A. Wolff, USA (Ret.), Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Department of State, telephone interview by authors, October 18, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Zengerle and David Lawder, "U.S. Congress Approves Arming Syrian Rebels, Funding Government," Reuters, September 18, 2014, available at <[www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-crisis-congress-vote/u-s-co...oves-arming-syrian-rebels-funding-government-idUSKBN0HD2P820140918](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-crisis-congress-vote/u-s-co...oves-arming-syrian-rebels-funding-government-idUSKBN0HD2P820140918)>.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Shurkin et al., *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), xiv.

<sup>22</sup> James N. Mattis, "Military Priorities," speech, U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, October 12, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Wolff.

<sup>24</sup> Colonel Eric S. Strong, USA, commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, telephone interview by authors, October 25, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> McChrystal.

<sup>26</sup> Sylvia.

<sup>27</sup> Wolff.

<sup>28</sup> Richardson.

<sup>29</sup> Townsend.

<sup>30</sup> Halstead.

<sup>31</sup> Townsend.

<sup>32</sup> Command Sergeant Major William F. Thetford, USA, Senior Enlisted Advisor, U.S. Central Command, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant General William D. Beydler, USMC, commander, Marine Corps Forces Central Command, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Command Sergeant Major Marc W. Eckard, USA, Senior Enlisted Advisor, Theater Special Operations Command—Central, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Vice Admiral John Aquilino, USN, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Combined Maritime Forces, and U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Work.

<sup>37</sup> McChrystal.

<sup>38</sup> Lieutenant General Michael X. Garrett, USA, commander, Army Central Command, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Major General Edward F. Dorman III, USA, director, U.S. Central Command Logistics Directorate, interview by authors, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, January 18, 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Major General George W. Smith, Jr., USMC, director, U.S. Central Command Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate, interview by authors, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, September 15, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Lieutenant General Jeffrey L. Harrigian, USAF, commander, U.S. Air Forces Central Command and Combined Force Air Component, Southwest Asia, "By, With, Through," briefing slides with roundtable discussion, Doha, Qatar, Al Udeid Airbase, October 27, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Garrett.

<sup>43</sup> Harrigian.

<sup>44</sup> *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy.*

<sup>45</sup> Townsend.