

Civil Affairs as a Function of Smart Power: Redefining Assessments, Reporting, Education, and the Role of Civil Affairs within Great Power Competition

By CPTs James Micciche, Kevin Chapla, and Kyle Staron

As U.S. strategy shifts away from Counter Terror (CT) and Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts that have defined U.S. global engagement since 9/11, defense officials have placed an emphasis on ensuring that the United States regains the capacity and capability to mitigate the influence and expansion of great and regional actors in strategic areas across the globe. It is within the re-emerging paradigm of great power competition that Civil Affairs (CA) has the potential to perform critical functions as instruments of smart power, bridging hard and soft power approaches, and acting as key intermediaries between various mechanisms of state power seeking to advance U.S. strategic goals. While uniquely positioned within the DoD to apply and project smart power, CA training and doctrine are inadequate to do so and must adapt to support current U.S. policy, while maintaining residual CT/CVE requirements and improving the capacity and capabilities of maneuver elements.

These adaptive efforts include

- (1) Establishing standard quantitative measures and assessments of the human domain
- (2) Improving reporting processes and structures with an emphasis on refining writing and analytical skills
- (3) Expanding access to and improving understanding of the interagency
- (4) Enhancing knowledge of all elements of national power

This paper utilizes academic research and publications, joint and service specific doctrine, foundational strategic policy documents, and data from a survey of CA captains with operational experience to define the current paradigm of global competition and then articulate the vital steps the regiment must undertake to be at the forefront of advancing U.S. strategic objectives across the globe.

Central to the authors' argument are the theories and application of *sharp* and *smart power*, specifically the prominent role CA has in countering the population centric methods of the former by integrating and identifying where best to apply the latter. Furthermore, the paper highlights fundamental flaws in the doctrinal methods CA uses to analyze and report findings and data pertaining to the human domain and recommends a series of solutions to mitigate the aforementioned deficiencies and better integrate into operational efforts across the spectrum of conflict.