

## In The Gray Zone, This Much Is Black And White: SOF Must Develop Partner And Ally Nation Capabilities

### Description

Clifford Lucas

Irregular warfare is fundamental to strategic competition with China and Russia. In his recent [congressional testimony](#), General Richard Clarke described the critical space in which this competition will unfold and who should play a key role: “SOF [special operations forces] remain ideally suited to [identify an adversary’s challenges in the ‘gray zone’](#) and counter those malign activities with firmness while managing escalation.” The United States is uniquely postured with this offset capability to dissuade China and Russia from destabilizing activities. Employment of unconventional deterrence methods [“by, with, and through”](#) US partners and allies will further enable SOF assets to amplify disincentives. The application of this suite of irregular warfare capabilities is most effective when comprehensively applied to a foreign internal defense enterprise. Accordingly, the United States must fortify the organic capabilities of partner nations, develop a sustainable resistance capacity to increase the potential costs to US adversaries, and ultimately, shape their behavior.

*This Irregular Warfare Initiative article was originally posted through our partner organization, the Modern War Institute at West Point. Continue reading the full article [here](#).*

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### Date Created

2022/12/13