

Soft Power Symposium - Changing the Game

Norfolk, Virginia, USA

7 June 2011



I thank the organizers for inviting me to speak before this symposium of Soft Power advocates. Having met some of you before this session, I felt the common energy that inspires us all to rise to the challenge of mainstreaming soft power to achieve permanent resolutions to conflict. I know that we all have encountered tremendous obstacles, mostly in the way our organizations think, organize, equip and conduct our respective mandates. But we cannot afford to be cynical and instead, soldier on we must, for we have seen the wisdom of applying soft power if we are to achieve a “just and lasting” peace.



Let me start off with this statement: Change frightens the timid, change threatens the comfortable, but change is an opportunity for the confident. It is a statement addressed to those of you who choose to be dynamic, daring and audacious.



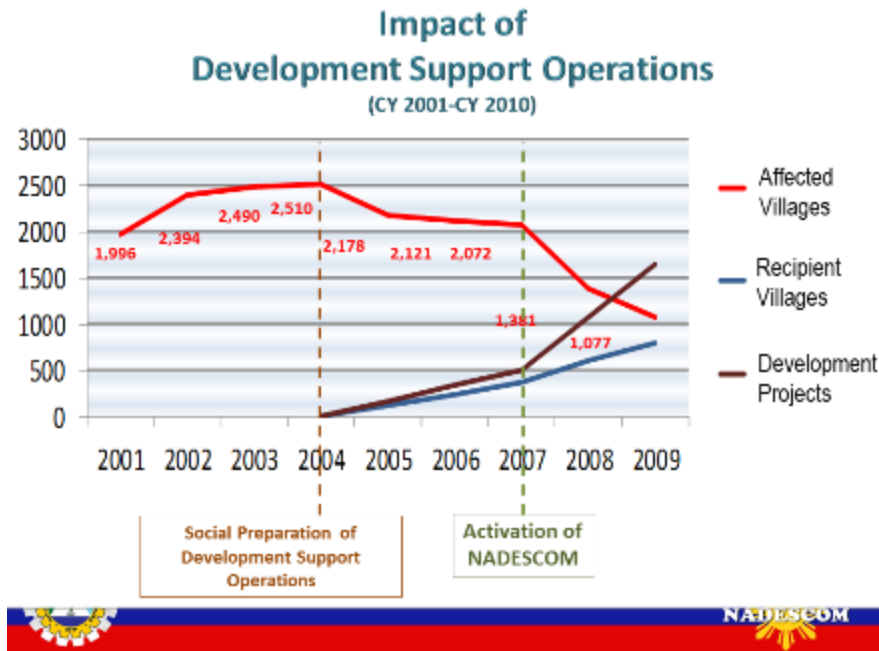
In the serious business of conflict resolution, you will be the game changers. It is this group of open-minded people who will initiate and manage change. While there will be traditionalists and conservatives in our organizations who will not want to rock the boat, those of us who will be able to adapt easily to the ever-shifting sea of novel ideas and practices, will harvest the fruits of this great endeavor. Hence, as the computer age brought along revolutionary variations in the way we do things, so too must war and its strategies and systems undergo corresponding modifications. And you, who are willing to pioneer this cause, are at the forefront of this sweeping change.




The nature of war and the tools of achieving victory have dramatically changed over the last decade. While the human grit and raw human emotions remain descriptive of today's gruesome contests, a new class of warriors is emerging. These are the silent but competent believers in the central idea that wars nowadays can no longer be won solely through military might – not through the number of planes nor the size of aircraft carriers – but through the aggressive non-violence of soft power as well.



Today, sustainable victory goes to the side that builds rather than destroys, that connects rather than divides, and that cares rather than condemns. And in this day and age where social media is beginning to flex its muscles, victory can indeed be secured rather quickly if only we have the right stories to tell. And in my experience, any accomplishment that improves the quality of life of people in conflict areas is a sure and secure step towards permanent peace.



Shown is a graph depicting how development support operations, or the use of soft power, has been winning over the many insurgent-infested communities in the hinterlands of the Philippines. From 2000 to 2003, the number of insurgent-affected villages was on the rise. This uptrend stopped in 2003, when the social preparations for the development support operations were initiated, and started to take a downward trend when DSO kicked off. In 2007, seeing the initial successes generated by DSO, Nadescom was organized and the methodology institutionalized. You can see a striking downtrend in the insurgency after that. Using development support operations, our counter-insurgency resources are hence more wisely and efficiently utilized. And that is the essence of soft power.




MISSION

...conducts support operations to *win the peace* in order to help the Filipino nation create an environment conducive for sustainable development

STRATEGY

Whole of Nation
People-centered/
Human Security

 **INTERNAL PEACE & SECURITY PLAN BAYANIHAN**  **NADESCOM**

Thus, this year, our Armed Forces formulated a new campaign plan. It is a radical departure from the old one in that, we now have a whole-of-nation approach, and a people-centered, human security approach.



We aim to establish an environment conducive to PEACE and DEVELOPMENT

 **NADESCOM**  **NADESCOM**

Where much of our energies had been previously used in conducting combat operations against local insurgents and perceived threats, today we aim to establish an environment conducive to peace and development.



Previously, our primary mode of employment was through combat operations. Victory was always defined through Vietnam-era statistics such as the body count, the number of firearms recovered and villages cleared. While we showed respectable accomplishments in neutralizing insurgents, the insurgency continued to linger. We could not rightfully claim that we had totally eradicated them, for there still exist a number that are too deeply entrenched in the fabric of the communities they prey on. Thus we saw the need to refocus and finally, to rethink our concepts.



The first step in this process was to re-evaluate our main stakeholders - the Filipino people. These are the very people that stand to benefit from our actions. To resolve conflict, we needed to find out what our stakeholders really expected of us. And a key realization in this exercise was that: we can only say that we have defeated insurgency if we, together with our people, have converged our perspectives into one shared future.



As we win, we do not celebrate alone, but with the community.



Victory



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Poverty



Lack of Infrastructure development



Lack of Education



Inefficient Agrarian Reform



Inadequate Health Services



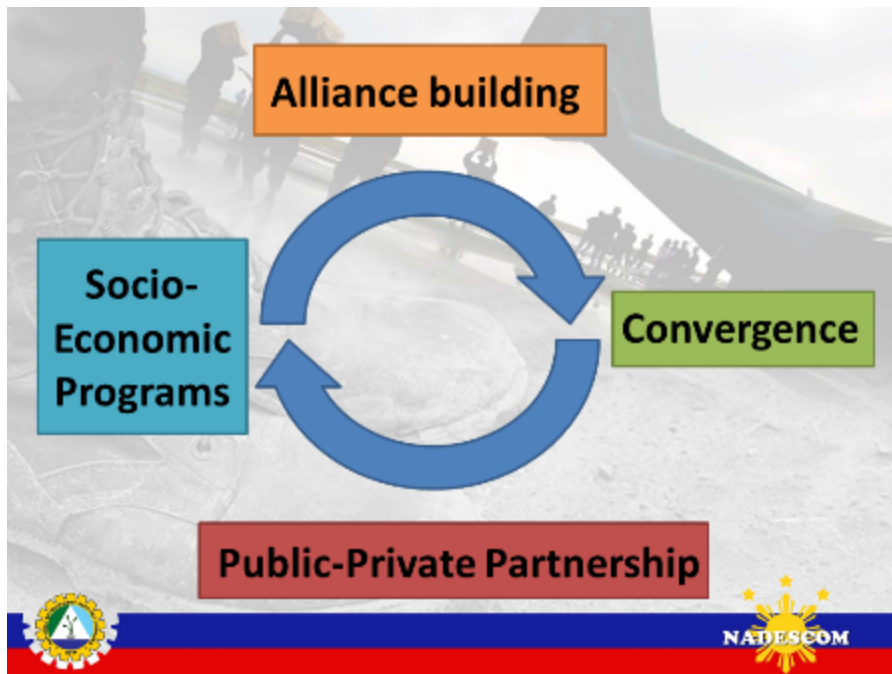
Addressing the root causes



Thus, in a landmark survey taken among key local stakeholders across the Philippines, there was one resounding finding.



Our people ask us to address the chronic man-made problems causing the insurgency; such as poverty alleviation, community security, health advocacy, education, governance, infrastructure development and agrarian reform management and the implementation of the rule of law. Instead of simply reacting to the insurgency, they wanted us to do more to prevent it - they wanted us to do more anti-insurgency work.



It was clear to us and our stakeholders that convergence, alliance building, public-private partnerships on development projects was – and is – the way to go.



We defined poverty as the primary cause of insurgency. And no amount of applied combat force would diminish the number of insurgents in the hinterlands for so long as the problem of poverty did not go away. We ventured to ask: Would the

results have been different if we had decisively infused soft power tools at the outset of the problem?



What if we had helped create more jobs, more business opportunities in a conflict area? What if we had done more in the training of farmers, the introduction of better technology, and focused more on increasing the marketability of the products from their areas?



Soft Power
more lasting
more economical
sustainable



As a veteran counter-insurgency practitioner for the last four decades, I have come to realize that soft power is more lasting, more economical and sustainable than raw military power.

From eliminating the enemy...



To fostering positive
relationships with people

Center of Gravity



Simply put, the center of gravity of today's asymmetric conflicts is not the enemy, but the people. Hence the solution is not in eliminating the so-called enemy, but in fostering positive relationships with the people.



What then can we do to mainstream the cause of soft power? Let us be as bold as our pioneering inventors, industrialists and statesmen who when confronted with a tremendous challenge, simply asked themselves “Why not?” Why not build a car when horse-drawn carriages were the kings of the road? Why not harness the sun when energy security is not assured? Why not organize the world of information that would make searching so amazingly easy? Why not apply soft power in the hardest and most enduring conflicts? These men were ready to change the game. Changing the game means having the courage to respond to a generational challenge. To grapple with the future problems created by resource, energy and environmental concerns, we cannot afford to be content with incremental changes. We have to shift our mindset, our long-established paradigms and ask ourselves, “Why not?”



Thus, we in the Armed Forces created a new campaign plan. This campaign plan puts more focus on development as opposed to combat.



We are redefining the enemy. The enemy is no longer the insurgent, for he is just a symptom of a problem. The enemy is poverty, ignorance, disease, injustice, corruption, the lack of governance, etc.



Thus, victory no longer means the elimination of the insurgent, our victory today means being able to successfully address the root causes that spawn the insurgency.



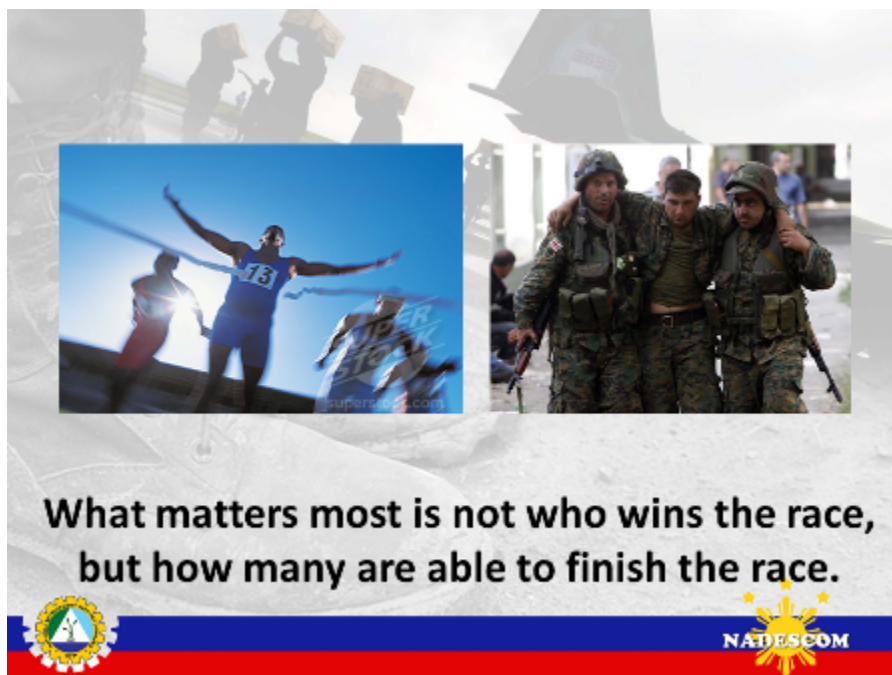
Having said that, today's soldier confronting an insurgency-type war must also be transformed. The soldier today must strive to be respected, not feared as espoused by Klauswitz.



From being a mere warrior, he must become a thinking warrior - the 'Information or Knowledge Warrior' knows that even beyond winning the war, winning the peace is what really counts.



Thus, training must no longer be focused on destructive war-fighting, but more on efforts to preserve humanity. As the epic challenges of climate change, food and water scarcity, non-renewable energy dependency and environmental degradations threaten us, we must forge a shared future where we also share the responsibilities.



What matters now is that we do not alone survive and thrive at the expense of others. What matters most is not who wins the race, but how many of us are able to finish the race. What's important is that we finish, we survive and thus, win together. The hero of our time is not the dominant victor but the benevolent warrior.



Today, it is necessary to cultivate a clear understanding, commitment and finally, ownership of the holistic approach to contemporary conflict resolution. It means we need to re-orient the soldiers' mindset from that of a violence-manager to that of a community developer. This requires the introduction of a different skill-set; from one that is trained to simply fight, destroy and kill, to one that is founded on sincerity, caring, teaching, listening, serving humanity and making peoples of this global community of nations truly happy.



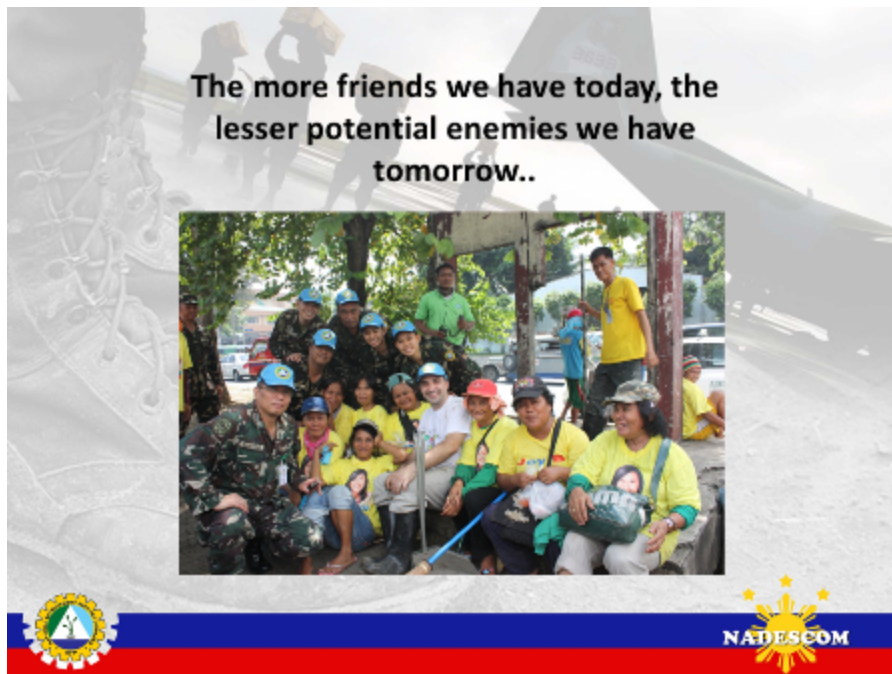
This new kind of enlightened training that we must champion also requires that we re-program the behaviors and attitudes of our soldiers. Thus, our traditional rewards system must be enhanced so that instead of focusing on combat awards, we will equally recognize achievements in the more challenging tasks of team or consensus building, community development, nation-building.



Now, a new form of leadership is unfolding. From the traditional concept of leadership in combat which was enemy-centric, we now have servant-leadership which is more people-oriented. From the old parameters of number of enemy killed and firearms taken, contemporary leaders talk more knowledgeably of non-military, economic and development parameters. From the conservative, isolationist military purists, we now have more engaging, more holistic, more out-of-the-box thinkers who choose to be dynamic, aggressive and relevant with the changing times.



Ladies and gentlemen, we are convinced that soft power is the cheaper, more lasting and better appreciated approach to resolving today's conflicts. Even as we allow others to anticipate and prepare for the possibility of big conventional conflicts in the future, we must propagate an aggressive non-violent mindset among those of us who are addressing the asymmetric wars of today.



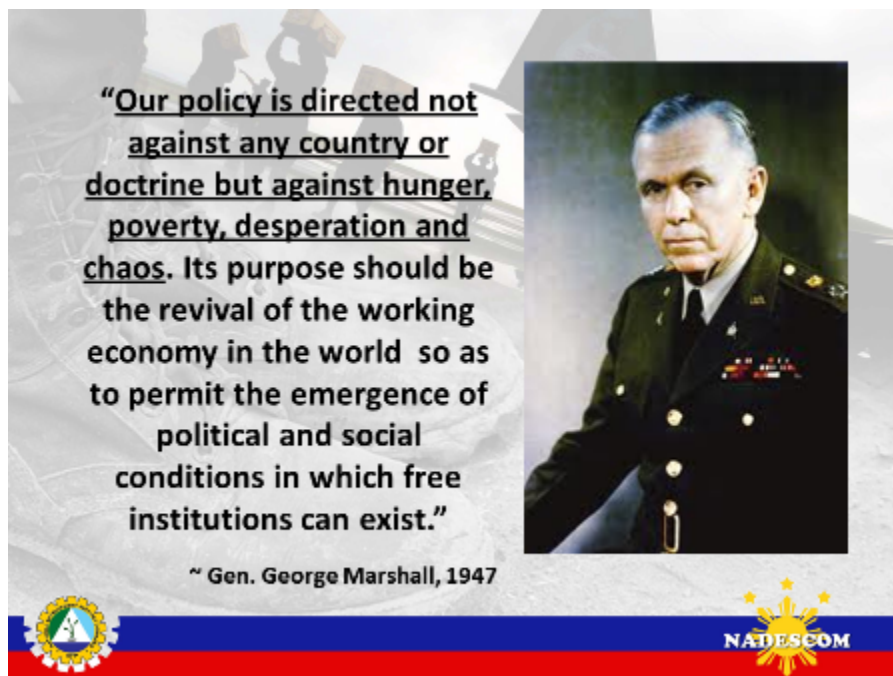
The more friends we have today, the lesser potential enemies we have tomorrow. That is the big idea, that is our goal.



My last point, and perhaps my last challenge towards our common desire to bring soft power into the mainstream is this: focus on the stakeholders and let them rate us. I deeply believe that It is only when our achievements are “stakeholder-

certified” that these achievements become sustainable. The primary motivation for people to participate in any endeavor whatsoever is: “what’s in it for me?” The true strength of the soft power approach lies in the fact that indeed, it answers this very question: what’s in it for them? Be it business, politics, counter-terror, counter-insurgency work, he who satisfies that question gets his product sold, gets the votes, gets his service patronized.




I end my talk with two passages from visionary American Industrial Age warriors, but whose messages remain as relevant today as they were during those days.



From Gen George Marshall: “Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of the working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist.”

"The history in failure in war can be summed up in two words: too late. Too late in comprehending the deadly purpose of the enemy; too late in realizing the mortal danger, too late in preparedness, too late in uniting all the possible forces for resistance, too late in standing with one's friends."

~ Gen. Douglas MacArthur, 1952



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These were two noted wartime generals who later on would successfully re-engineer the recovery of Western Europe and Japan respectively. They were the original warriors turned soft-power advocates. They knew about the value of soft power long before the word was even coined.

Thank you, and may the force be with all of us!!!