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ENHANCING FULL-SPECTRUM FLEXIBILITY: STRIKING THE BALANCE TO

MAXIMIZE AIR FORCE EFFECTIVENESS IN CONVENTIONAL AND

COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

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Abstract

With the United States currently engaged in difficult and taxing counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, renewed emphasis has been focused upon the country's capabilities and priorities vis-à-vis this type of warfare. Within the military, the Air Force has been especially and increasingly criticized for being too enamored with a Cold-War era conventionally minded force structure and for not shifting aggressively to meet the threats of COIN-style conflicts that many predict will be pervasive throughout the Global War on Terror.

This paper addresses the conceptual capabilities and limitations of air power in COIN in order to illuminate how the Air Force can leverage the distinct asymmetric advantage that air power presents across the spectrum of conflict. This asymmetry is founded upon a clear U.S. superiority in air power capabilities combined with the unique flexibility inherent in air power. An understanding of air power's efficacy in COIN, measured against conventional requirements and capabilities, will inform decisions on appropriate force structure and employment.

Conceptualizing the generic strategic mindset of insurgent 'doctrine' is indispensable before a relevant discussion of the effectiveness and limitations of air power can be undertaken. Chapter 1 offers a brief examination of the nature of insurgencies so that the reader can understand the framework and broad assumptions from which the discussion will proceed. If COIN operations come to represent the greatest challenge to U.S. interests in the future, as many suggest they will, changes in Air Force programs and structure must also be predicated on whether or not air power by its nature can be fashioned into an appropriate response. Chapter 2 seeks to understand the conceptual limitations and capabilities of air power in COIN operations in order to determine potential seams of using weapons developed for conventional contests in an irregular role. Chapter 3 examines the fundamental premise that COIN operations will be more frequent and critical than conventional operations, and introduces factors that may mitigate a repetition of current resource-intensive COIN operations. Chapter 4, the concluding chapter, presents broad recommendations regarding implications for force restructuring based on the findings of the previous chapters.

The basic conclusion reached is that weapon systems should continue to be developed largely based on the most critical perceived (generally conventional) requirements, but that the application of air power should be guided by officers with a much greater understanding of COIN as well as other military operations across the spectrum of conflict. This approach will

ensure that the Air Force is best prepared for the most critical and existential threats, for which it is most uniquely decisive and relevant. Given the political nature of counterinsurgency, air power should be seen as a critical factor in *military* operations, but not in itself decisive in defeating an insurgency.

The final recommendations of Chapter 4 are 1) Understand and accept the relevance of air power in COIN and conventional warfare, 2) Neither focus on nor neglect COIN-specific requirements in future development, 3) Better educate officers on the operational and strategic levels of warfare across the spectrum of conflict, and 4) Return to beginning with strategy and operational art to address military quandaries. Leveraging inherent flexibility and with only modest investments in COIN-specific capabilities, air power can be a more consistent and effective contributor to COIN campaigns when directed by airmen who are educated and trained to employ it in a spectrum-appropriate manner.

Enhancing Full-Spectrum Flexibility: Striking the Balance to Maximize Air Force Effectiveness in Conventional and Counterinsurgency Operations

Introduction

"All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible."

-- T.E. Lawrence

With the United States currently engaged in difficult and taxing counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, renewed emphasis has been focused upon the country's capabilities and priorities vis-à-vis this type of warfare. Much has been made of the neglect of counterinsurgency warfare since, and arguably due to, the failed attempt to salvage Vietnam. In the past, even reaching a consensus on what to call such conflicts has been elusive, and terms such as counterinsurgency, counter-terror campaign, low intensity conflict, small wars, unconventional wars, uncomfortable wars, irregular wars, Military Operations Other Than War, internal wars, fourth-generation wars, limited wars, civil wars, guerilla wars, counterrevolution, and many others have been liberally applied to the same or similar conflicts. Though some of the terms are clearly more meaningful for certain conflicts, and most of them at least have some subtle shade of merit and thus may represent a more appropriate taxonomy for a given operation, in the pursuit of standardization and simplification, the term counterinsurgency, and its acronym, COIN, will be used throughout this paper when referring to conflicts in which a government is seeking to defeat a significant, often existential, internal threat to its legitimacy using military means as well as other elements of national power.[1] This is not to minimize the subtle differences, which are important. One preponderant theme that runs throughout this paper is that each conflict must be judged, dissected, and evaluated anew: there is no panacea or magical template to apply to all counterinsurgency-type warfare.

While questions about how to prevail in Afghanistan and Iraq (as well as in the larger Global War on Terrorism, now increasingly referred to as simply 'the long war') apply equally to government agencies and interstate coalitions worldwide, nowhere has the debate been more acute or urgent than within the U.S. military.[2] Even as remarkable conventional victories using

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innovative strategies expeditiously disgorged the Taliban from Afghanistan and the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein from Iraq, U.S. and coalition forces quickly discovered that initial battlefield success was not easily converted into lasting political victory. In each of these conflicts, with the conventional phase successfully concluded, combat operations transmogrified into post-war chaos accompanied by deadly insurgency operations that were not adequately forecast or planned for. Since the end of major combat operations was declared in both wars, thousands of servicemen and women from all branches have been killed and billions of dollars have been spent in new technologies and new programs to combat the follow-on insurgencies.[3]

Within the military, the Air Force has been especially and increasingly criticized for being too enamored with a Cold-War era, conventionally minded force structure and for not shifting aggressively to meet the threats of what many proclaim to be a new era of COIN-style conflicts that they predict will be pervasive throughout the Global War on Terror.[4] Much of the debate has centered on high-tech weapon systems that consume significant portions of the service's budget but do not seem relevant to COIN operations, or which at best represent an expensive alternative to what could be accomplished by lower tech platforms. Beyond the technology debate lie the thorny issues of structure and organization, which are also under constant review from Air Force leadership. Of all the debates which rage, however, none is more acrimonious than the debate surrounding the fundamental efficacy of air power in COIN operations. The recently released Army Field Manual FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, stands as a prime example as it was the source of great consternation to many airmen due to the scant attention paid to air power and its perceived relegation to a subsidiary, if not questionable, role.[5]

The underlying purpose of this paper is to address the conceptual capabilities and limitations of air power in COIN in an effort to illuminate how the Air Force can take advantage of the distinct asymmetric advantage that air power represents across the spectrum of conflict. This asymmetry is founded upon a clear U.S. superiority in air power capabilities combined with the unique flexibility inherent in air power. This paper concludes that weapon systems should continue to be developed largely based on the most critical perceived (generally conventional) requirements, but that the application of air power should be guided by officers with a much greater understanding of COIN operations. This approach will ensure that the Air Force is best prepared for the most critical threat of conflict, for which it is most uniquely decisive and relevant. Given the political nature of counterinsurgency, air power should be seen as a critical

factor in *military* operations, but not in itself decisive in defeating an insurgency. Leveraging inherent flexibility and with only modest investments in COIN-specific capabilities, air power can be a more consistent and effective contributor to COIN campaigns when directed by airmen who are educated and trained to employ it in a spectrum-appropriate manner.

Understanding the generic strategic mindset of insurgent 'doctrine' is indispensable before a relevant discussion of the effectiveness and limitations of air power can be undertaken. While emphasizing that every insurgency must be dealt with in its own unique context, a brief examination of the nature of insurgencies is presented in Chapter 1 so that the reader can understand the framework and broad assumptions from which the discussion will proceed. If COIN operations come to represent the greatest challenge to U.S. interests in the future, as many suggest they will, changes in Air Force programs and structure must also be predicated on whether or not air power by its nature can be fashioned into an appropriate response. Chapter 2 seeks to understand the conceptual limitations and capabilities of air power in COIN operations in a bid to determine potential seams of using weapons developed for conventional contests in an irregular role. Chapter 3 returns to examine the premise that COIN operations will continue to be more frequent and more critical than conventional endeavors and examines factors that may mitigate a repetition of current resource-intensive COIN operations. The concluding chapter presents broad recommendations regarding implications for force restructuring based on the findings of the previous chapters.

This paper is not intended to examine in depth the tactical utility of existing or theoretical platforms or systems in COIN operations or to delineate specific recommendations regarding educational or training programs that would enhance COIN capabilities. It will attempt to remain within the conceptual realm and outline problems with the hope that others who plan and design programs and systems may be better empowered to solve the problems.

Chapter 1: The Nature of Insurgencies

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable;
when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near,
we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we
are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him."
-- Sun Tzu

It may seem strange for a country founded upon a successful insurgency and which has participated in or provided critical support to counterinsurgency operations in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Greece, China, Cuba, Vietnam, El Salvador, and Colombia (just to name a few) to seem so uncomfortable and off balance in the face of contemporary insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. The United States is no stranger to either side of insurgent warfare. As an illustrative modern anecdote, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the U.S. supported an insurgency waged by mujahidin fighters which successfully removed the Red Army by 1989; in 2001, the U.S. organized a successful insurgency to oust the ruling Taliban, relying heavily upon special operations forces and indigenous Northern Alliance militia elements, only to find itself now fighting a counterinsurgency operation against the resurgent Taliban and its supporters in order to sustain the current democratically elected government. Insurgencies are an enduring and common occurrence in military history: a quantitative project on warfare classified 43 percent of 118 violent international conflicts between 1816 and 1980 as insurgencies.[6] Insurgencies are not only frequent but they are also, by their nature, unpredictable, brutal, and prolonged conflicts in which a smaller force seeks to mitigate the military advantage of its opponent by any manner of means. This stands in stark contrast to what has come to be known as the 'American Way of War' which is portrayed as quick, decisive, and, increasingly, humane.[7]

The codified U.S. military definition of an insurgency is "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict."[8] Though there are many illuminating works on the nature of insurgency and case studies of numerous past insurgencies, to an even greater extent than conventional warfare, insurgencies develop their own character based on a myriad of factors including leadership personalities, political goals and means, government responses, regional and international influences, geography, demography, religion, sociological underpinnings, and the collective culture of the indigenous population. Such complexity makes it imperative that each insurgency be considered

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in its own unique context. Added to this confusion, the lines between conventional warfare and insurgency are often blurred during the struggle, and many conventional wars spawn reactionary groups that can, as operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom make clear, present challenges that often far surpass the complexities of the conventional phases of conflict.[9] Each insurgency has, as it were, its own unique fingerprint that uniquely distinguishes it in subtle but perceptible ways (to the perceptive) from all conflicts that preceded it and all that will follow it. Even with fingerprints, however, there are patterns and generalities that help us to classify, sort, and utilize them. A general examination of the whirls, loops, and arches of insurgencies reveals many commonalities that distinguish insurgencies from conventional warfare and is useful as a starting point for seeking to gain a fundamental understanding of any particular insurgency.[10]

A Different Kind of War

> *"It does not require a majority to prevail, but rather an irate,*
> *tireless minority keen to set brush fires in people's minds."*
>
> *-- Samuel Adams*

The first thing that must be understood about an insurgency is that it is formed around intangible objectives that cannot be destroyed or captured as is often attempted in conventional warfare.[11] Galula, using Clausewitzian concepts, describes insurgency as "the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means."[12] It is sometimes described as the warfare of the weak since insurgents lack the conventional capability to directly confront their opponent. Contrary to popular perceptions, insurgency is not generally a reasoned choice between alternatives. As Merom writes, "Almost by definition, starting an insurgency war is a matter of default choice. Communities turn to insurgency because other forms of fighting, such as limited or full conventional war, are unavailable or excessively dangerous."[13] A desperate man in a mortal struggle might prefer a gun but avail himself of a club, if that were his only recourse, but without ever abandoning his efforts to secure a gun in the future. So it is with insurgency, what Taber calls "the war of the flea," with the conventional enemy obliged to suffer the disadvantages of the bewildered but helpless dog: "too much to defend; too small, ubiquitous, and agile an enemy to come to grips with. If the war continues long enough—this is the theory—the dog succumbs to exhaustion and anaemia without ever having found anything on which to close his jaws or to rake with his claws."[14]

In the operational warfare lexicon of space, time, and force, insurgents are generally resigned to concede space and force to the enemy while manipulating time until able to wear down the will of the opponent or to reach some sort of conventional parity. Henry Kissinger simply but powerfully described the dichotomy posed by insurgency: "the guerilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win."[15] Time is leveraged by insurgents for building up their own forces (both morally and quantitatively), capabilities, and legitimacy while simultaneously degrading those of the enemy. If they are to have any chance of success, counterinsurgent forces must likewise be extremely patient and disciplined—the average successful counterinsurgency effort requires 14 years.[16] To the skilled insurgent, time is the key weapon, especially when seeking to expel a foreign power. Patient and prolonged insurgent warfare in various forms was the agent for the demise of the great European colonial empires of Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal—all established and sustained over hundreds of years and largely collapsing precipitously within two decades of the conclusion of World War II.

Insurgency can also be placed in the context of Clausewitz's famous triangle of warfare relationships formed by the government, the people, and the army.[17] For an attacker, Clausewitz offers advice that is equally pertinent to any would-be counterinsurgent: "in countries subject to domestic strife…and popular uprisings, the [center of gravity] is the personalities of the leaders and public opinion. It is against these that our energies should be directed."[18] As Air Force doctrine points out, conventional warfare is generally targeted at the level of, and interplay between, the army and the government, while insurgencies most often seek to affect the government through its link with the people.[19] In conventional warfare, military forces generally seek to compel the government to cede to demands through the destruction of their military capability through set battles or attacks. Insurgents, at least in early stages, attack military targets only as a means to shift the legitimacy balance away from the government and towards themselves: they operate militarily only to serve broader political means in the attempt to force a "climate of collapse" upon the resisting government.[20] Military inferiority compels them to shrink from set battles and retreat to hide in sanctuary areas to avoid annihilation from superior conventional forces. These sanctuaries provide physical, legal, or moral protection from the enemy and can include terrain that conventional forces find difficult to operate within (e.g., mountains or jungles), sovereign border states, areas where government control is diminished or

nonexistent (traditionally rural areas), or simply hiding amongst a sympathetic population (increasingly amongst urban populations).[21] The success or failure of an insurgent relies on the support, or at least the non-interference, of the local population which acts as "his camouflage, his quartermaster, his recruiting office, his communications network, and his efficient, all-seeing intelligence service."[22]

Insurgents generally begin with the strategic advantage of better local intelligence and the ability to control the initiative. The insurgent decides where, when, and how often to attack while "his military opponent must wait, and, while waiting, he must be on guard everywhere."[23] Governments are generally slow to recognize—and slower to admit—the seriousness of an insurgency as the well-prepared insurgent will camouflage the movement until it is ready to confront the regime. Insurgents maintain the comparative ability to decide and act expeditiously as juxtaposed against the somnolence of a turgid government bureaucracy. When the situation is ripe, the insurgent will often attempt to provoke a government overreaction by launching a major attack (defined by moral and propaganda value, not necessarily operational effect) intended to bait the government into responding militarily and to sacrifice legitimacy if its reaction is perceived as either ineffective or overblown. An insurgency is most vulnerable in its incipient stage before it has developed effective networks of support.[24] Due to its intelligence advantage, however, the government rarely uncovers the organization or understands its capabilities until it broadcasts itself. Insurgencies that begin military operations before solidifying their support network are generally short lived (e.g., Che Guevara's failed attempt to launch a revolution in Bolivia in 1967).

Another critical turning point in many, though not all, insurgencies is the decision to resort to a conventional strategy. Movements following the Maoist and similar popular models of revolution expect to progress to conventional superiority and then defeat government forces in regular combat.[25] Indeed, it is difficult for an insurgent group whose aim is the total overthrow of a government to succeed if it cannot progress to this stage (the end of apartheid in South Africa and the 1979 Sandinista takeover in Nicaragua being two exceptional examples). Through impatience or miscalculation many insurgent groups have leaped to this stage prior to having obtained true conventional superiority over government forces, which are generally most adept at this level of combat. Examples of this are the premature and near crippling 'final offensive' by the FMLN in El Salvador in 1981, Viet Cong participation in the 1968 Tet

Offensive (though the cause was eventually secured by the North Vietnamese regular army, the Viet Cong was virtually obliterated), and the communist Greek Democratic Army's fatal decision to transform into a conventional force in 1948 leading to their swift defeat in the Greek Civil War.

Exploiting Asymmetries: Judo for Insurgent Warfare

> *"And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it,*
> *and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead;*
> *and he fell upon his face to the earth."*
>
> **-- *1 Samuel 17:49***

Much is made of the word 'asymmetric' in current discussions of insurgent and terrorist actors. Skilled conventional opponents have always sought to determine and exploit asymmetries, and current trends are not nearly as revolutionary as they are often portrayed. With its overwhelming conventional advantage in the post-World War II world, the U.S. has grown accustomed to attempting to force every violent confrontation into the mold that plays most to its own asymmetric advantage—to do so is prudent, but not always possible. The U.S., for example, has come to rely on its asymmetrical advantages in, among other areas, technology, firepower, mobility, command and control, and air power to generate favorable results in conventional conflicts. Insurgents, like any competent political or military opponent, seek to mitigate the advantages of their opponent and create and exploit more diverse asymmetries that may become available to them. One of the first requirements for any successful insurgency is to mitigate the effectiveness of the government's asymmetric military advantage. This is most often done by making it difficult for the government to distinguish between insurgents and innocents, but it may also be accomplished by utilizing any other means of sanctuary as discussed previously. Frustration builds as the government loses legitimacy by not effectively providing security against insurgent attacks, and the demand for action often leads to the overreaction sought by insurgents. As Metz and Millen write, "Often the regimes were blamed when their use of force hurt innocents while insurgents often were not—one of the core asymmetries of insurgency is an asymmetry of expectations concerning behavior. Thus one of the key decisions for counterinsurgents was deciding whether the political cost of armed strikes against the insurgents was worth paying."[26]

There are other common asymmetries that insurgencies often wrest from the government in their campaigns. Historically, for example, insurgents have displayed a cunning ability to control and exploit propaganda both at home and in the international media. Galula judges this to be a key advantage that successful insurgents can exploit to great effect:

> The asymmetrical situation has important effects on propaganda. The insurgent, having no responsibility, is free to use every trick; if necessary, he can lie, cheat, exaggerate. He is not obliged to prove; he is judged by what he promises, not by what he does. Consequently, propaganda is a powerful weapon for him. With no positive policy but with good propaganda, the insurgent may still win.[27]

Attempting to manipulate the press is not a viable option for Western militaries either ethically or practically. Even when dealing with innocuous information, most uniformed personnel are uncomfortable and ill prepared to deal with the media to begin with, having little to gain and a career to potentially lose.[28] They are trained to be tight-lipped with information, and tend to not make pronouncements until every relevant fact has been examined. The result is that they are left constantly reacting to the 24-hour breaking news press cycle while insurgents remain largely unhindered and unaccountable from making extreme claims, especially regarding civilian deaths, which are geared to be sensational enough to make primetime news. After counterinsurgent forces thoroughly investigate and release their sanitized, bureaucratically- worded reports, the information generally lacks the excitement of front page material and will likely generate a degree of interest more akin to the corrections section. Added to this, skilled insurgents benefit from the public tendency to believe that the government will not be forthcoming and honest regarding embarrassing or deleterious information.[29] Barbaric acts are often expected of insurgents by Western audiences and tend to have diminished negative effect and sometimes even a net positive shock effect that benefits the insurgents (the dragging of a U.S. Ranger's body through the streets of Somalia, for example), while indiscretions committed by government forces (e.g. My Lai or Abu Ghraib) are met with universal moral outrage and often result in strategic reversals.

Other common potential asymmetries insurgents often achieve include strategic initiative (given their ability to exploit safe areas), culture (differences in the value placed on human life, for example), morality (insurgents are not normally recognized as legal combatants and generally have little interest in abiding by internationally established laws of armed conflict), economics (it

being much cheaper to fund an insurgency than to extinguish one), organization (insurgents will likely exceed a government bureaucracy's capacity to rapidly make and execute decisions), intelligence (at least on a local level), and any number of other possibilities. This is not to say that government forces are not without inherent non-military asymmetries that derive from the considerable legitimacy and resources inherent within a nation-state. Each asymmetric advantage that an insurgent organization accrues must be wrested from the opposing government. Each asymmetry thus becomes a virtual battleground in itself, and success or defeat hinges on defending or mitigating one's own critical vulnerabilities while discovering and exploiting enemy asymmetric weaknesses.

Destructive and Constructive Elements of Counterinsurgency

> *"You can't kill your way out of an insurgency."*
> *-- General David Petraeus*

Conventional military forces are designed and trained to destroy threats. The U.S. military, for example, brings overwhelming firepower to bear to inflict damage to the enemy while minimizing the loss of life and materiel to itself.[30] Insurgents often use these instinctive reactions to their benefit by provoking an overreaction by government forces which serves to further delegitimize the regime in the eyes of its own population (or at least a targeted segment thereof) or the international community. For an intervening third power (e.g., the U.S. in Vietnam or France in Algeria), it can also act to influence the opinions of their home constituencies. In this way, insurgents chip away at the legitimacy of a regime through attrition of its forces as well as provoking a reaction that can be used as propaganda to build support. For the conventionally superior military force possessed by a liberal democracy such as the U.S., the center of gravity is most likely to be public opinion at home. Insurgencies purposefully impose a difficult paradox on U.S. military leaders who must seek to minimize friendly military casualties (often focused very acutely) without resorting to excessive firepower that would likely result in unacceptable civilian casualties; a failure in either of these efforts is likely to occasion the catastrophic loss of domestic support.[31]

Of Hearts, Minds, and Who's Likely to Be Here Tomorrow

> *"Ideas are far more powerful than guns. We don't allow our enemies to have guns,*
> *why should we allow them to have ideas?"*
>
> ***-- Joseph Stalin***

Defeating an insurgency by military force alone is exceedingly problematic and nearly inconceivable if the counterinsurgent force is constrained by morality. Overwhelming violence, when wielded by ruthless and savvy dictators (e.g., Stalin, Tito, Hussein etc.), though not universally successful, has been demonstrated throughout history to quell insurgencies. Established totalitarian regimes are likewise, by definition, not usually subject to successful insurgencies: "A control of this order rules out the possibility of launching an insurgency. As long as there is no privacy, as long as every unusual move or event is reported and checked, as long as parents are afraid to talk in front of their children, how can contacts be made, ideas spread, recruiting accomplished?"[32] Though all insurgencies tend to be identified with depravity on both sides (insurgents often employ it as a tactic and seek it as a reaction), the United States and other Western militaries are unlikely to be capable of effectively pursuing a strategy or backing a regime that attempts to destroy or control those who empathize with an idea, as opposed to grappling with the idea itself. Insurgencies can be best viewed as negative reactions to government policies or practices. Most within the population who hold grievances are not motivated to violence. If, however, the grievances are not settled through addressing the offending policies or practices, or by some other means to alter the perceptions of those who harbor some level of sympathy with the insurgent agenda, discontent against the government is likely to spread, and the insurgency will gain momentum.[33] This process may be further accelerated by military overreaction, which can greatly distress the sympathetic population and further alienate it from the government. Overly relying on military means alone to defeat an insurgency often proves counterproductive, like trying to destroy a dandelion by blowing on it.

The fact that insurgencies have been overcome through naked force necessitates a careful reconsideration of the familiar cliché that counterinsurgencies are all about 'winning hearts and minds'. Not all insurgencies are popular and not all insurgents attempt to 'win hearts and minds'; this is especially true when insurgents receive third-party materiel support for their cause relaxing their reliance on local support.[34] Many insurgents use standard tactics of fear, intimidation, forced recruitment, and making examples out of those who are sympathetic to the

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government.[35] Insurgents who resort to such tactics are not likely to win 'hearts' but, as Fisher and Manwaring elucidate, "Personal security is the primary basis upon which any form of societal allegiance to the state is built."[36] Insurgents, much like unpopular dictators and totalitarian regimes, can leverage 'minds' and at least ensure passivity from a target population if they can hold it in fear.[37] This is true even if benevolent government forces recapture the area unless and until the population becomes convinced that the forces will remain in the area to provide lasting security *and* that they will eventually prevail in the conflict. A similar dynamic holds true for the counterinsurgent force, especially when a third party is assisting. Given cultural and religious differences, for example, it will often be exceedingly difficult or impossible for U.S. personnel to win the 'hearts' of local populations, but it is not always strictly necessary as long as the mind believes that U.S.-backed government forces will prevail and rule by them is preferable to rule by the insurgents. In most insurgencies popularity is subservient to self interest, and the side that offers better guarantees—or is more credible in its threatenings, as the case may be—will maintain the upper hand with the general population.

If You're Not Sure It's a Nail, Put Down the Hammer

> *"The hard must humble itself or otherwise be humbled. The soft will ultimately ascend."*
> ***-- Tao te-ching***

Given the difficulty of defeating an insurgency through purely military means, especially for liberal democracies and especially in the information age, effective COIN campaigns are marked by political reforms that address the concerns of the target audience of the insurgency. COIN can then be thought of as containing a constructive element as well as a destructive element. This is the singular distinction of insurgency that is most responsible for the observation that "military superiority can no longer guarantee political victory, while military inferiority does not exclude the possibility of victory."[38] Rod Thornton articulated well the challenges for a military in dealing with an insurgency: "Insurgencies and war are, in many ways, mutually exclusive. They require different vernaculars, psychologies, and approaches. At heart, insurgencies need to be managed away while wars need to be won."[39] The military portion of national power is most appropriately concerned with the destructive element of counterinsurgency and is best used to isolate the insurgents from the population, provide continual security, and discriminately target insurgents that are not susceptible to political

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reconciliation.[40] The lifestyle of the insurgent is naturally difficult to begin with; the military, paramilitary, and police elements must seek to make it increasingly so to discourage potential recruits even as other government entities seek to make alignment with the government increasingly lucrative—the constructive element. Though security concerns or other constraints may require a preponderant use of the military element in the constructive role, this role should ideally be as temporary as possible, especially in the case of third country military intervention. Requiring and assisting non-military indigenous government agencies to address the constructive requirements of a campaign will restore legitimacy to the government more effectively and fully, and will require the host government to develop capabilities required for long-term stability.

Between constructive and destructive purposes, the former is significantly more important for eventual success. As one of the architects of the British counterinsurgency effort in Malaya, Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, reflected, "the shooting side of the business is only 25 percent of the trouble. The other 75 percent lies in getting the people of this country behind us."[41] The destructive element must always be subservient to the constructive one: it is always more desirable to capture the cause than to capture or kill those espousing it, though it is often a hard reconciliation to enact. When governments try to gauge the success of COIN efforts using body counts, engagements won, or other destructively oriented metrics against any but the most incompetent of insurgencies they are on the path to failure.

Third Parties in Counterinsurgencies

"There is at least one thing worse than fighting with allies – And that is to fight without them"
-- Winston Churchill

Modern insurgencies rarely occur in a vacuum. Third party groups and states often have strategic political interests at stake related to the success or failure of the besieged government. This was especially true during the Cold War when the Soviet Union and other communist governments routinely supported revolutionary movements across the globe. The U.S. often entered the conflict in support of government forces (and occasionally to assist the insurgents as in the 1961 Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion, as well as in Afghanistan and Nicaragua in the 1980s) openly fighting with or supporting government forces in locations ranging from Vietnam to the Philippines to El Salvador. Third party participation in a counterinsurgency effort is nearly always a sensitive and difficult proposition. Third party intervention on behalf of the

government almost without fail diminishes local perceptions of government legitimacy—it stands as prima facie evidence that the regime is not capable of defeating the insurgency and providing security unassisted. The greater the perceived presence, influence, and undesirability of the third party, the greater the challenge is to the government's legitimacy. The undesirability of the third party is based on perceptions of past dealings (with salience being proportional to recency), its interest in the conflict, and its cultural or religious distance from the host nation population.

How to Win Friends and Influence (Bad) People

"When you have to kill a man it costs nothing to be polite."
-- Winston Churchill

Third party COIN interventions are generally most effective when they are early and minimal.[42] Interventions by the United States almost always result in claims of imperialism from insurgents and, in proportion to the extent that the intervention is large and sustained, such claims enhance the legitimacy of the insurgents at the expense of the government. Metz and Millen effectively note the challenges that such 'liberation insurgencies' present:

> The approach that usually works against national insurgents—demonstrating that the government can address the root causes of the conflict through reform—does not work nearly as well since the occupiers are inherently and insurmountably distinct from the insurgents and their supporters. Their outsider status cannot be overcome by even the most skilled information campaign. What motivates the insurgents is not the lack of jobs, schools, or the right to vote, but resentment at occupation, interference, and rule by outsiders or those perceived as outsiders. Reform is not the key to a solution as it normally is in national insurgencies. For this reason, skilled insurgents prefer to have their movement seen as a liberation one rather than a national one, thus making the mobilization of support and internal unity within the insurgency easier.[43]

Liberation insurgencies also imply a distinct initial disadvantage to the outsider who is unlikely to have the intelligence apparatus or social, cultural, or historical knowledge to be as effective as his opponents. If, however, the third-party can encourage positive economic and social progress through direct assistance to, or influence over, the host government, the outside power can be a beneficent, or even essential, element in a successful COIN effort.

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An antithetical problem of large-scale intervention is that it sometimes actually discourages the partner government from effectively combating the insurgents. Before significant U.S. support is offered, U.S. policymakers must understand the character of the host government and its ability and desire to implement any requisite political, economic, and social changes necessary to defeat the insurgency. U.S. intervention may take the pressure off of an incorrigibly corrupt or obtuse regime to develop and use its resources against the insurgents, as well as delaying or denying the need to address fundamental issues of policy or corruption that, if resolved, could bolster legitimacy. This effect was notable in South Vietnam throughout the 1960s as government and military reforms were desultory at best and never took full advantage of the breathing space afforded by an unprecedented, though admittedly often ill-focused, level of U.S. involvement and assistance. By contrast, when the U.S. provided COIN support to El Salvador throughout the 1980s, Congress limited the number of troops in the country to 55 and restricted them to an advisory role.[44] The limited U.S. assistance and advice was effectively leveraged by the El Salvadoran government which, motivated by the seriousness of its situation, held democratic elections that resulted in the junta relinquishing power, increased the size and professionalism of its armed forces, and provided popular reforms that helped undermine the cause of the revolutionaries leading to the recognized end of the conflict in 1992.[45] One difficult paradox for the U.S. is that small levels of support generally limit the leverage available to persuade a besieged government to alter its policies or practices, while larger levels of support may lead to a premature relaxation of government efforts and a presumptive cession of legitimacy to insurgents. An additional challenge is that, even when combat troops are not dispatched, supporting a government against insurgents binds a nation's own domestic and international legitimacy to the partner government's actions. When, for example, in actuality or in perception, including as a result of effective insurgent propaganda, atrocities occur or inhumane policies are promulgated, the rectitude of continuing U.S. support is subject to criticism and questioning at home and abroad.[46]

Counterinsurgency Challenges for Democracies

> *"There are two things which a democratic people will always find very difficult—*
> *to begin a war and to end it."*
>
> *-- Alexis de Tocqueville*

Realist assumptions about relative power do not adequately account for the higher statistical probability of success for insurgent movements confronting powerful states and third country supporters as compared to the likely success of a larger power when confronting a smaller nation in a conventional conflict. This paper has already touched upon the moral and psychological asymmetry that insurgents often exercise over opponents, and which seem especially effective against democracies, as well as constraints which make it extremely unlikely for a modern liberal democracy to overcome an insurgency by purely military means. There are several credible theories extant in the available literature as to why states with armed forces vastly superior to the military capabilities of an insurgency are not as likely to attain victory over insurgents as they would be over conventional military forces. Three of the most important are posited or referenced by Ivan Arreguin-Toft in his work "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict". Toft's own theory is based on strategy mismatches, while two others that he presents are based on 'democratic squeemishness' and interest asymmetry in COIN. Each of these warrants some examination to better understand COIN challenges for the U.S.

Dressing Improperly for the Occasion

> *"The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and*
> *commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking."*
>
> *-- Carl von Clausewitz*

In his book, Toft notes that, "With the exception of long wars, democratic states appear to win wars more often than authoritarian states."[47] The trend, however, has been for weak actors to increasingly fare well in asymmetric conflict so that in the period from 1950-1999, strong actors, by his criteria, only succeeded 49 percent of the time in advanced insurgencies.[48] In order to explain why stronger states face a more difficult struggle when confronting well-developed insurgencies, he posits:

> If strong and weak actors use a strategy representing the same strategic approach—direct against direct, or indirect against indirect—strong actors should win as the conventional wisdom suggests. If, however, strong and weak actors employ strategies representing

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opposite strategic approaches—direct against indirect or indirect against direct—weak actors are much more likely to win than the conventional wisdom allows for.[49]

Using these criteria, Toft observed that strong actors won 76.8% of same-approach conflicts while weak actors prevailed in 63.6% of all opposite-approach efforts in campaigns occurring between 1800 and 2003.[50] Toft's analysis provides useful evidence of the necessity to understand the nature of the conflict one is engaged in and to ensure an appropriate counterstrategy is pursued. Unfortunately, the only classification he provides for an indirect offensive strategy is barbarism, "the deliberate or systematic harm of noncombatants (e.g., rape, murder, and torture) in pursuit of a military or political objective."[51] Toft's classification methods are also open to dispute. In his Vietnam case study, for example, he reclassifies U.S. strategy several times and specifically identifies Operation Rolling Thunder as barbarism. This judgment is based on reports prepared for Secretary of Defense McNamara which indicated that the operation yielded negligible military effects.[52] Since it was militarily ineffective but inevitably resulted in collateral damage and civilian casualties, he classifies it as barbarism rather than strategic or operational incompetence, or as having been intended to achieve a political effect rather than a military one in the first place.

Toft's analysis may be useful insofar as it portrays the difficulty of overcoming an insurgency by means of a conventional military strategy—attempting to fight an insurgent movement using conventional strategies is like trying to rid a house of termites with an axe. Unfortunately, his analysis has no prescriptive value for liberal democracies that find themselves constrained from resorting to barbarism as strategy. None of the case studies he presents explains the case of a successful COIN intervention without resorting to barbarism. To be fair, his argument seems to be geared more toward detailing how authoritarian governments have an advantage in this type of warfare.[53] For the current discussion, the salient lesson to be learned from his analysis is that a proper counterstrategy is an essential element for military and political victory in war.

How to Give a Democracy Indigestion: Brutality in COIN

> *"War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it."*
> **-- Gen William T. Sherman**

A related theory which predates Toft's asymmetric strategy analysis is submitted by Merom who proposed that "democracies fail in small wars because they find it extremely difficult to escalate the level of violence and brutality to that which can secure victory."[54] Historical evidence, especially since World War II, supports the theory insofar as it outlines the many failures democracies have had in overcoming major insurgencies juxtaposed against the relative high proportion of success they have enjoyed in conventional warfare. The theory seems to hang on a premise best articulated by Taber: "There is only one means of defeating an insurgent people who will not surrender, and that is extermination. There is only one way to control a territory that harbours resistance, and that is to turn it into a desert. Where these means cannot, for whatever reason, be used, the war is lost."[55] Merom effectively outlines a previously-alluded-to critical obstacle confronting democracies in their attempt to execute effective COIN operations:

> The internal struggle in democracies does not escape insurgents. Rather, it emboldens them, influences their feasibility calculations, and provides them with strategic targets outside the battlefield. Indeed, insurgency leaders often follow the domestic developments within their enemies' societies, seeking to exploit the divisions they identify. They do so by trying to impose on their enemies a high enough casualty-rate in the expectation that the latter will trigger expedient opposition to the war. Occasionally, however, they also try to lure democratic opponents into behaving brutally in order to increase the moral opposition to the war. Both efforts are usually accompanied by well-tailored messages that are directed at the democratic society.[56]

Skillful insurgents are likely to have easy access to U.S. public opinion—in all probability they will be solicited by international news organizations—but the opposite is not generally observed.

With regards to both the general historical post-World War II context and the specific U.S. situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, moral asymmetries are readily recognized by military commanders and insurgents alike:

> Coalition forces maintain a strict adherence to the law of armed combat. This translates to the Iraq people as a universal belief that the United States is overly compassionate and

non-confrontational…. As described by Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., before the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, "Non-Western enemies understand Western military vulnerabilities: aversion to casualties and collateral damage, sensitivity to domestic and world opinion, and lack of commitment to conflicts measured in years rather than months."[57]

Modern democracies are characterized by the free flow of information, internal cleavages that are rapidly exploited by domestic opposition parties, and a susceptibility to international criticism and economic downturns that are part and parcel of counterinsurgency efforts. They are also, however, under tremendous pressure to reduce losses to their own personnel. Primarily for this reason, Downes, in contradiction to Merom's premise, argues that, "Democratic regime type by itself increases the likelihood that a state will victimize enemy noncombatants in warfare."[58]

Notwithstanding Downes' compelling data regarding the paradox of democracy in theory and in practice during warfare, Merom's analysis appears to have some merit and is borne out by the rapid demise of democratically-administered empires after World War II. While Merom's argument strongly militates towards the avoidance of COIN involvement by democracies, there are two theoretical caveats that might be attached to his argument: true liberal democracies are less likely to confront existential insurgencies on their own territory since they provide more organic mechanisms for conflict resolution, and democracies have, in fact, demonstrated an ability to help allies defeat insurgencies when the effort effectively centers on bolstering the legitimacy of the host nation. The lessons that can be drawn for the U.S. are, first, any partner nation experiencing an insurgency likely has legitimacy issues that precipitated the resort to violence, and, second, attempts to bolster a regime that is unwilling to undertake significant democratic and/or economic reforms are unlikely to succeed in the end.[59]

How Bad Do You Want It? Risk vs. Interest in Insurgency

"I do not mean to exclude altogether the idea of patriotism.
I know it exists, and I know it has done much in the present contest. But I will venture to assert,
that a great and lasting war can never be supported on this principle alone.
It must be aided by a prospect of interest, or some reward."
-- George Washington

A third theory that Toft observes in his analysis and refers to as 'interest asymmetry' is founded upon the work of Andrew Mack. The basis of the interest asymmetry lies in Mack's observation that "for the insurgents the war is 'total,' while for an external third-party power it is necessarily 'limited'."[60] The nature of total war empowers insurgents to apply the full range of available tactics with effectiveness alone as the only arbiter of policy. COIN regimes may be forced by domestic and international variables to limit strategy and tactics with effectiveness often a secondary concern: "When the war is perceived as 'limited'—because the opponent is 'weak' and can pose no direct threat—the prosecution of war does not take automatic primacy over other goals pursued by factions within the government, or bureaucracies or other groups pursuing interests which compete for state resources."[61] Nowhere is this more notoriously illustrated than in a memorable quote from an American army general regarding Vietnam: "I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, its institutions, its doctrine and its traditions, to be destroyed just to win this lousy war."[62]

This interest asymmetry presents serious obstacles to the outside power where the presumed fruits of successful engagement as contrasted with the likely harm to national security as a result of failure are often exceedingly ambiguous and are not perceived to be as disparate as they are for the insurgents who are waging a theoretical life-and-death struggle.[63] For a democracy engaged abroad, there may be little discernible difference between the questions of, "So what, if we win?" and, "So what, if we lose?" As lives are lost, treasure is expended, and propaganda, whether true or not, takes its toll, there is apt to be a gathering movement for withdrawal: "When the survival of the nation is not directly threatened, and when the obvious asymmetry in conventional military power bestows an underdog status on the insurgent side, the morality of the war is more easily questioned."[64] One thing that Mack's observations cannot adequately compensate for, however, is how a democracy's obsession with winning a conflict can become an end in itself regardless of initial political goals. Once engaged in a significant conflict and having endured substantial losses, it may become exceedingly difficult for a major

power to withdraw, especially under the leadership of the administration or party that initially committed to the conflict.

Despite having substantial limitations, Mack's insights provide a final warning of the difficulty of counterinsurgent warfare for democratic states. Given the generally protracted nature of insurgencies, democracies must carefully measure the value of the object before engaging in the conflict. The U.S., for example, seems most likely to succeed when the interests involved are sufficiently high and clear, or involvement is measured and low key. The sure proximity of Afghanistan to Al Qaeda and the events of September 11th helps account for the long-term commitment to that conflict, while continued persistence in Iraq, despite its perceived cost-benefit disparity as measured by public opinion polls, is more difficult to explain without greater historical context and perhaps considering the political difficulties of conceding failure as opposed to focusing solely on the perceived value of success. Other less obtrusive contemporary efforts such as those in the Philippines and the Horn of Africa fall in line with the 'low key' criterion above since they require limited resources and have not garnered much media attention.

While none of the above theories can stand independent in describing the challenges that democracies must overcome to be successful in a counterinsurgency, taken together they provide a somber warning against taking COIN lightly. Insurgencies seem to be particularly effective in minimizing the asymmetric strengths of liberal democracies while taking full advantage of democratic weaknesses; this asymmetry is not limited to military measures, but encompasses the entire political foundation of liberal democracy. In light of the vulnerabilities described by Toft, Merom, and Mack, to be most competent, democracies must understand and adequately match the strategy of the insurgents, they must realize the limitations of military force when it is fettered by moral constraints, and they must ensure that the value of the object is popularly perceived to be clearly greater than the prolonged sacrifices required.

Notwithstanding the limitations that should not go unheeded, modern democracies that are able to apply sound counterinsurgency principles in the proper cultural context do have a favorable chance of success. Fishel and Manwaring, for example, conducted extensive quantitative research on 43 insurgencies between 1945 and 1985 involving a Western state as one of the antagonists. Using seven variables, they found that 88 percent of the cases could be accurately explained.[65] The variables are broad (resembling many of the principles cited above) and may not completely fall within the ability of an intervening power to affect, but they have

considerable prescriptive value for Western democracies both in determining whether or not involvement is likely to be successful and in devising effective strategies once intervention has been determined. While there is no silver bullet for COIN success, a thorough understanding of the nature of insurgencies is the first key in stacking the odds in one's favor.

[1] This standardization is based on Army Field Manual FM 3-24, which was jointly adopted by the Army and Marine Corps and shared inputs from various inter- and non-governmental agencies. The author prefers the term "Small Wars" as popularized in the U.S. by the 1940 Marine Corps Small Wars Manual, and, prior to that by British Colonel C.E. Callwell, author of the 1896 book, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, though he was also not the first to use the term. "Small Wars" tends to be linguistically appropriate to a broader range of conflicts though it can carry the unfortunate connotation that these conflicts are somehow not as important, as difficult, or apt to require as significant numbers of forces as conventional conflicts. *Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2006).

[2] The term "the long war" is significant in its repudiation of the GWOT terminology, which has often been criticized as improper and unhelpful, as well as its connotation of global counterinsurgency warfare. Robert Jervis, for example, writes:

> The label "war" implies the primary use of armed force. Other instruments like diplomacy and intelligence may be used, but they are in the service of the deployment of armed force. I believe this conceptual frame is unfortunate when it comes to dealing with terrorism. Here diplomacy, the international criminal justice system, and especially intelligence are primary. With good information, almost everything is and can be done to reduce terrorism; without it, very little is possible.

As cited in Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "Understanding Victory and Defeat (Some Conclusions)," in Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds., *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2007): 228. The author disagrees with the short shrift implied by Jervis to the term war which should always imply the most serious and existential national emergency requiring, by definition, the coordinated use of all elements of national power. The Obama administration has unofficially discarded the GWOT phraseology without replacing it with a term that broadly defines and connects the global efforts of U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military efforts to confront Islamic extremists.

[3] At the time of this writing, combat-related deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq have surpassed 4,900 Americans and, according to the nonpartisan Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the overall cost for both wars had surpassed $900 billion. Cited from "Wars' Price Tag Put at $904 Billion," *Washington Times*, December 16, 2008, p. 2.

[4] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, for example, writes, "Support for conventional modernization programs is deeply embedded in the Defense Department's budget, in its bureaucracy, in the defense industry, and in Congress. My fundamental concern is that there is not commensurate institutional support—including in the Pentagon—for the capabilities needed to win today's wars and some of their likely successors." Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs* (Jan/Feb 2009): 29.

[5] See, for example, Major General Charles A. Dunlap, Jr., "Shortchanging the Joint Fight? An Airman's Assessment of FM 3-24 and the Case for Developing Truly Joint COIN Doctrine," available at http://aupress.au.af.mil/121007dunlap.pdf; Internet; accessed 12 Nov 2008.

[6] Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982): 52, 59-60, table 2.2. The massive Correlates of War project (using criterion of at least 1,000 deaths to qualify as a war and spanning the period from 1816 to 1997) identifies 211 inter-state wars (between countries), 141 extra-state wars (between states and non-state actors—generally but not always classifiable as an insurgency), and 260 intra-state wars (within states—again, generally some form of insurgency or civil war); see Meredith Reid Sarkees, "The Correlates of War Data on War: An Update to 1997," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 2000, 18/1: 123-144.

[7] The American way of war is exemplified by the so-called Powell doctrine which, among other tenets, asserts that military force should only be used when a vital national security interest is at stake, broad public and international support is ensured, and a plausible exit strategy is in place. When force is used, it must be employed overwhelmingly and decisively to ensure victory and limit U.S. casualties. See Collin Powell, "U.S. Forces: The Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* (Winter 1992).

[8] *Joint Publication 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff, 2001): 268.

[9] The American Revolution, for example, could appropriately be labeled a conventional campaign, an insurgency, and an internal civil war depending on the time frame and theater of operations.

[10] For a discussion on the question of whether or not the study of past insurgencies is productive in providing insights into current and future insurgencies, see Austin Long, *On Other War: Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006): 13-20.

[11] This is not to say that conventional warfare is not concerned with political ends, just that history has been more favorable to a successful political settlement resulting from military dominance in conventional campaigns. This may, however, be a circular argument in the end since how we delineate conventional campaigns may to some extent be rooted within the perception of how successfully the conflict was ended.

[12] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Praeger, 1964): 3.

[13] James Merom, "The Origins and Implications of Western Counterinsurgency Failures," in Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds., *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2007): 171.

[14] Robert Taber, *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerilla Warfare Theory and Practice*, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970): 29.

[15] Henry Kissinger, "The Viet Nam Negotiations," *Foreign Affairs* (Jan 1969): 214.

[16] According to current International Security Assistance Force Commander for Afghanistan, General David McKiernan quoted in Aug 11, 2008 *Spiegel* interview available from http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,571345,00.html; Internet; accessed Nov 18, 2008.

[17] The expression 'trinity,' 'paradoxical trinity,' or 'wondrous trinity' that is often used to describe this relationship is purposefully not used here. Though commonly misunderstood, Clausewitz's 'paradoxical trinity' of warfare actually refers to tendencies or forces of war rather than to the human actors. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976): 89.

[18] Clausewitz, 596.

[19] *Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3, Irregular Warfare*, (Maxwell AFB, AL: Secretary of the Air Force, 2007): 3.

[20] Taber, 31.

[21] Mao's famous dictum comparing guerillas to fish swimming in the sea of the population remains the most powerful metaphor to explain the importance of the population for insurgency security, though in Mao's case this rhetoric was as much for propaganda purposes as a comment on military strategy—often, as was frequently the case in the Chinese communist revolution, the guerillas are more akin to sharks among fish.

[22] Taber, 22-23.

[23] Ibid.

[24] As to the point of early recognition and reaction, Metz and Millen write, "Counterinsurgent planners should always remember that timing matters. As with health care, a small effort early is more effective than a major one later on. While it is difficult to discern, insurgencies do have a point of 'critical mass' where they become much more formidable opponents. If the United States is able to help a threatened partner augment its military, psychological, and political capability rapidly and early, it may be able to prevent the insurgents from attaining critical mass. In general, U.S. intervention for counterinsurgency support is most likely to succeed at an acceptable cost before an insurgency reaches critical mass (however hard that may be to identify). U.S. involvement after an insurgency has reached the 'point of no return' where it cannot be defeated at a reasonable cost is likely to be ineffective. If an insurgency reaches this point, the United States should pursue disengagement even given the strategic and political costs." Steven Metz and Raymond A. Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004): 28.

[25] See Mao Tse-tung, *On Protracted War*, available from http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm; Internet; accessed Nov 13, 2008.

[26] Metz and Millen, 9.

[27] Galula, 14.

[28] One example of this is when General Michael Dugan was dismissed as the Air Force Chief of Staff for his controversial and potentially security-breaching remarks to reporters regarding war plans for liberating Kuwait in the weeks prior to Desert Storm. Likewise, in 2008, Admiral William Fallon, the commander of U.S. Central Command, resigned over controversial statements he had published in an article for *Esquire* magazine.

[29] Metz points out another potential insurgent advantage that obtained in Iraq: "Hussein's tight control of information had left the Iraqi public poorly prepared to distinguish truth from disinformation, thus amplifying the effects of insurgent propaganda." Steven Metz, *Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007): 191.

[30] The purpose of the U.S. military, and militaries in general, is often characterized as to "kill people and break things"—neither of which bodes well when combating insurgencies.

[31] Avi Kober describes this as "post-heroic warfare"—"one is neither 'allowed' to get killed nor to kill—at least not civilians." Avi Kober, "The End of Israeli Omnipotence?" in *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating Fourth-Generation Warfare,* eds. Terry Terriff, Aaron Karp, and Regina Karp (New York: Routledge, 2008): 151.

[32] Galula, 29.

[33] Sir Robert Thompson, however, writes that "if the [revolutionary] organization is already established, and well-trained and disciplined, it will not be defeated by reforms designed to eliminate the cause. It will only be defeated by establishing a superior organization and applying measures designed to break the revolutionary organization." Cited from John T. Fishel and Max G. Manwaring, *Uncomfortable Wars Revisited* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006): 111.

[34] Consider, for example, the following description of the FLN's efforts in Algeria: "Inexplicably, the FLN never tried to compete for the hearts and minds of the Algerians. Insurgents used racketeering to obtain funds and food and terrorist acts to intimidate the inhabitants into silence. Jacques Soustelle, the governor general in 1955, observed that the FLN 'never sought to attach the rural populations to their cause by promising them a better life, a happier and freer future; no, it was through terror threat they submitted them to their tyranny.'" Raymond A. Millen, *The Political Context Behind Successful Revolutionary Movements, Three Case Studies: Vietnam (1955-63), Algeria (1945-62), and Nicaragua (1967-79)* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008): 118.

[35] For example, Peru's Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) movement, the NLF in Algeria, and the Viet Cong in Vietnam all used brutal intimidation among the target population. Even insurgencies that outwardly seek to win hearts are likely to maintain an element of coercion to root out and punish or eliminate government sympathizers.

[36] Fishel and Manwaring, 46.

[37] See, for example, Findley and Young: "Ford argues, furthermore, that whereas counterinsurgents need the active support of the population, insurgents need only create neutrality to be successful." Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, "Fighting Fire With Fire: How (Not) to Neutralize an Insurgency", *Civil Wars* (Dec 2007): 390.

[38] Kober, 159.

[39] Italics in original. Rod Thornton, "A 'New' Form of 'Warfare'?" from *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating Fourth-Generation Warfare* eds. Terry Terriff, Aaron Karp, and Regina Karp (New York: Routledge, 2008): 92.

[40] Army FM 3-24, p. 1-9: "True extremists are unlikely to be reconciled to any other outcome than the one they seek; therefore, they must be killed or captured."

[41] Cited in Ian F.W. Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerillas and Their Opponents Since 1750* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001): 102.

[42] Metz and Millen point out the desirability of a small U.S. footprint, "While a large U.S. military presence may be needed during the early part of a counterinsurgency campaign following intervention and or the stabilization of a failed state, over the long term, a small military footprint, supporting a larger law enforcement effort is an effective solution that crushes the insurgency without giving the insurgency a nationalist rally cry against an occupying power. In general, the smallest effective U.S. military presence is the best." Metz and Millen, 32.

[43] Ibid, 4.

[44] It would, however, be assuming too much to think that this decision was based purely on principles of effective counterinsurgency operations as opposed to domestic and international political realities. U.S. support came almost too late and mostly as a result of the insurgency being Marxist based and presumably supported by Nicaragua, Cuba, and/or the Soviet Union.

[45] The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the primary political party behind the insurgency, was permitted to continue in political opposition and, in March 2009, its candidate was elected president of El Salvador.

[46] Referring back to the El Salvadoran example above, the execution, by order of the military commander of San Salvador, of six Jesuit priests and three attending civilians in 1989 had major ramifications to U.S. support and was only mitigated by El Salvador's concession to Bush administration demands to prosecute the official.

[47] Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (Cambridge UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 28.

[48] Ibid, 4.

[49] Ibid, 24.

[50] Ibid, 44-45.

[51] Ibid, 31.

[52] See Ibid, 153-154.

[53] Ibid, 27: "I argue that authoritarian regimes have an advantage in a particular kind of war: a war in which the regime's opponents try an indirect defense strategy, such as terrorism, guerilla warfare, or nonviolent resistance. In such a war, the costs and risks of employing the harshest measures are lower for authoritarian regimes, while the benefits—which don't vary with regime type—remain potentially high."

[54] Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 15.

[55] Taber, 11.

[56] Merom, 23.

[57] Christopher M. Ford, "Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population's Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency," *Parameters* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 60-61.

[58] Alexander B. Downes, *Targeting Civilians in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008): 5.

[59] To this point, Taber observed, "We have defined guerilla warfare as the extension of politics by means of armed conflict. It follows that the extension cannot logically come until all acceptable peaceful solutions—appeals, legislative and judicial action, and the resources of the ballot box—have been proved worthless. Were it otherwise, there would be no hope of enlisting the popular support essential to revolutionary activity." Taber, 31-32.

[60] Andrew J.R. Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* Vol 27, No. 2 (1975): 181.

[61] Mack, 184.

[62] Cited in Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001)*:* 24.

[63] Insurgents obviously also have different levels of commitment. Findley and Young, for example, "contend that varying degrees of commitment arise in the population based on different cultural, religious, or ideological backgrounds and experiences." Findley and Young, 379. Better understanding and targeting sources of commitment as well as insurgent groups that are more or less dedicated would be extremely important to COIN prosecution.

[64] Mack, 186.

[65] Fishel and Manwaring, 87-88. They label their findings as the SWORD model after the U.S. Southern Command's Small Wars Operations Research Directorate which sponsored the initial research. The seven variables are: military actions of the intervening power, support actions of the intervening power, host government legitimacy, host government military actions, actions against subversion, unity of effort, and external support to the insurgent.

Chapter 2: The Limitations and Capabilities of Air Power in COIN Operations

"It is vain to do with more what can be done with less."

-- Occam's Razor

Given that heavier-than-air craft have only recently celebrated their centennial, the utility of aircraft in modern warfare is truly revolutionary, and both the evidence and the promise engendered in the exploitation of the air and space medium continue to widely surpass that offered by land and sea platforms in terms of applications in current and future projections of warfare. There can be no doubt as to the critical, even potentially decisive, nature of the airplane in conventional conflict. Air power purists and their ground-focused critics routinely, and esoterically, argue the theoretical conventional limits of unassisted air power and whether or not it can independently win a war. Such arguments are only likely to lead to (or perpetuate, as the case may be) dysfunctional relations between services and to influence strategy in ways that are more parochial than tailored to specific prevailing circumstances.[1] Air power's great military utility lies in its contribution to warfare in general and, specifically, in the synergies it generates when utilized in concert with joint force and interagency capabilities. Depending on the nature of operations, a heavy or even total reliance on air power may be prudent; but because some operations lend themselves to air warfare solutions is no reason to believe that air power has made other joint capabilities obsolete. The same is true for operations where air power applications are more limited and primarily warrant a supporting role to ground or naval forces.

In order to better determine force structure implications, it is necessary to consider the limitations and capabilities of air power in COIN. Generally one speaks of capabilities and then limitations, but in this case the limitations of air power in COIN serve to establish its boundaries and frame an overall conceptual groundwork more fully than its capabilities do. Since this is a conceptual more than a practical level discussion, to be useful it is also necessary to consider arguments for how the Air Force might increase its capabilities and applicability with regard to COIN. The most persistent argument offered as to how the Air Force should transform to meet COIN threats is that the 'Cold War' high-tech assets that the Air Force routinely procures at present are not effective in dealing with insurgencies, and low-tech, COIN-centric assets are more appropriate.

The Limitations of Air Power in Counterinsurgency

"Know your limitations and be content with them.
Too much ambition results in promotion to a job you can't do."

-- David Brent

Given the nature of insurgencies as outlined in Chapter 1, air power must generally be relegated to a subordinate, though important, role in successful COIN operations. The paramount reason that the Air Force cannot be independently successful in COIN operations is that its primary effectiveness either resides within the destructive domain or in its support of other means—all major Air Force missions with regard to COIN operations are either concerned with destroying insurgents and their infrastructure, or providing a vast array of support to ground-based COIN forces. Military ground forces are also insufficient in and of themselves, but the ability to utilize a vast number of military personnel for non-military missions in lieu of qualified civilian personnel allows them to be used in a greater variety of constructive pursuits, though at a diminished effectiveness vis-à-vis experienced civilian administrators. Ground forces, especially when leveraged with appropriate air support, can also provide security, which is the ideal constructive mission for military forces.

The unparalleled speed, range, lethality, and precision of Air Force strike platforms make them ideal for conventional operations where massed fires are critical to battlefield victory. They are equally and increasingly adept at destroying insurgent targets when they can be definitively identified. U.S. air power has rapidly evolved to the point where it is virtually able to destroy any surface target (increasingly encompassing moving targets) anywhere on the planet at will and notwithstanding enemy efforts to prevent it. This precision strike capability is an important contribution in any counterinsurgency operation, but it is unlikely to be decisive. As presented above, the constructive element of a COIN operation is more critical than the destructive element, especially when employed by a liberal democracy. Some potential reasons that air power enthusiasts as well as many of their vociferous critics—the one arguing that air power can do everything, while the other contending that it isn't doing anything—seem unable to objectively recognize the limits of air power in COIN operations are the overwhelming success of air power in its conventional role, the perceived lack of Air Force participation in current endeavors, and the low casualty rate among Air Force personnel.

Voices of Confusion: Why isn't the Air Force Doing Everything/Anything?

> *"Nevertheless, conventional operations by themselves*
> *have at best no more effect than a fly swatter."*
>
> **-- David Galula**

Recent conventional experience has demonstrated the unprecedented asymmetric advantage that U.S. air power enjoys over its opponents. Losses of aircraft and crew during contemporary operations such as Desert Storm, Deliberate and Allied Force, and Enduring and Iraqi Freedom to date have all been remarkably minimal. Operation Desert Storm resulted in an overwhelming victory and the loss of only 14 Air Force aircraft and 20 personnel killed in battle.[2] Operation Allied Force, despite 78 days of intense bombing, resulted in no friendly combat fatalities thus accomplishing its prime, if unstated, directive to minimize coalition casualties despite sacrificing mission effectiveness in many instances. The initial phase of Operation Enduring Freedom relied heavily on air power to provide fire support to Northern Alliance forces with embedded U.S. Special Operations Forces teams, a strategy that enjoyed considerable success in limiting U.S. losses and overthrowing the Taliban. Likewise the conventional opening of Operation Iraqi Freedom was also characterized by intensive and effective aerial attacks though with an abbreviated air-only phase due to the accelerated launch of the ground invasion. Even as the overall effectiveness of air power in each of these operations will continue to be disputed by parochial pundits well into the future, by any reasonable standard the Air Force has proven its ability to conduct extensive and successful strike operations against opponents with relatively sophisticated anti-air defenses while sustaining only minimal casualties. Largely for this reason air power has come to be seen as part and parcel of the 'American Way of War'. Given air power's demonstrated superiority over opponents and with the public frequently exposed to images of precision guided weapons hitting their targets with pinpoint accuracy, there is little wonder why many find it hard to understand why the Air Force, with its superabundance of technical wizardry, seems unable to play a more substantial role in defeating insurgents with extremely modest military capabilities.

The perceived lack of participation by Air Force personnel, as well as the comparatively small casualty statistics among airmen for current operations, together form the basis of the charge that the Air Force is not 'pulling its weight'. Much of this is misperception. Media coverage seems more apt to bias its reporting towards negative events on the ground centering on

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U.S. combat deaths and Iraqi and Afghani civilian deaths. The only significant air event that is routinely and extensively reported upon is when collateral damage occurs killing noncombatants. A great deal of the contributions of air power is in the non-attack role; these missions are ordinarily not very elegant and get short shrift in the media. It is certainly true that Air Force personnel are not deployed as frequently or for as long as their Army and Marine counterparts— most Air Force deployments are for four-month cycles though there are six-month and one-year tours including several thousand 'in lieu of' tours where airmen directly fill Army billets. Deployment statistics can also fail to capture the overall level of effort since a significant portion of airlift and tanker missions are not in a deployed state but transit deployed locations in support of combat operations on temporary duty status missions lasting from days to several weeks.[3] It is undoubtedly accurate to say, however, that generally Air Force deployments are shorter, less dangerous, and in more favorable locations. The Air Force casualty rate is also certainly far below that of the Army and Marines. As of this writing, the number of airmen killed in Iraq and Afghanistan operations is 80, while the Army has suffered 3,564 deaths, and 1,084 Marines have died.[4]

While the high levels of deployment and combat casualties among soldiers and Marines are indicative of the difficulties under which they labor, there is no reason to believe that increasing the number of Air Force personnel deployed or exposing them to more risk would further the overall effort. Wars are not won (though they may be lost) by counting casualties, and promoting any correlation between deaths or hardships and effectiveness is deleterious. With the possible exception of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) support, which has required considerable time to develop, there have been no enduring complaints that the Air Force has been inadequate or incompetent in providing strike, airlift, or other support as requested.[5] The ability to meet the extensive requirements of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan without deploying more personnel and while maintaining a very low casualty rate should be viewed positively. Flying aircraft in combat (or even in training) has not always been as safe as it is at present, and airmen have sometimes had greater deployment requirements than their counterparts in other services, including 11 years supporting Operations Northern and Southern Watch over Iraq. The seeming disparity of an Army and Marine Corps working at full capacity while the Air Force maintains reserve capability has led many zealous airmen and many equally zealous critics to demand that the Air Force do more

when in fact there is little reason to believe that in COIN operations air power can substitute for the hard work required on the ground. This recognition explains the recent increase in the size of Army and Marine Corps end strengths by 92,000.

The most visible military contribution air power can make in an insurgency is in striking insurgents and their infrastructure. As evidenced by the minimal losses to enemy fire, insurgents have little military ability to counter U.S. air power. One Taliban commander's assessment that was overheard and recorded by U.S. intelligence expressed his view that, "Tanks and armor are not a big deal—the planes are the killers. I can handle everything but the jet fighters."[6] Though modern insurgents are not without kinetic means to challenge aircraft flying overhead, the two most effective ways of dealing with air power for insurgents are to prevent detection (defensive) and to propagandize the negative effects (offensive).

The Flea's Defense Against the Eagle: What They Don't Know Can't Kill Me

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete."
-- Sun Tzu

Even a theoretical paradigm of absolutely precise air power is absolutely constrained by accurate intelligence. All opponents, conventional and insurgent, are practiced at denying intelligence in various ways. For modern insurgents, the ability to function in a non-hierarchical, decentralized, cellular network apparatus where members have limited access to information and require only a modicum of support or interaction from other members to be effective is an important defensive mechanism denying actionable intelligence to the U.S.[7] Principles of insurgent organization were spawned by and have continually evolved to meet the need to mitigate the enemy's ability to collect actionable intelligence based on the natural premise that "a force that is organized, trained and otherwise prepared to apply large scale force is not well suited to high complexity conflicts. Similarly, a force that is designed for high complexity conflicts is not well suited to large scale conflicts."[8] Intelligence is the key asymmetry that makes the battle for 'hearts and minds' so conclusive in an insurgency. As Christopher Ford speculates, "It is not unreasonable to posit that virtually every attack launched against coalition forces in Iraq has occurred in the presence of noncombatants—individuals who could, if they were so inclined, report the attack anonymously, stop the violence, and increase security. Yet consistently these individuals have been unwilling to step forth and either stop or report such attacks."[9]

With the requisite intelligence, modern ground or air forces could quickly overpower any insurgency in the same way that domestic crime would cease to exist if police forces had access to perfect intelligence.

Insurgents quickly become experts in long-standing military principles of operational security, deception, and strategic camouflage. They also act by force of reason, ideology, cultural affinity, or old-fashioned coercion to ensure that the segment of the local population that is aware of their activities will not report on them. Air power has the advantage of being able to strike more quickly and with less risk of casualties based on accurate intelligence, but it is just as tied to intelligence requirements to be effective as ground forces are. Moreover, air power has only a tangential ability to influence 'hearts and minds' on the ground to lead to such intelligence: "Some might argue that the arrest of Khalid Shaykh—the organization's most senior terrorist planner and the reputed architect of the September 11 attacks—damaged Al Qaeda's operating ability more than any air strike against any other Al Qaeda leader."[10]

To be sure, the ability to collect intelligence independently of local cooperation is considerable and ever growing, but insurgents quickly adapt workarounds to counter or at least mitigate such methods. In both Iraq and Afghanistan where the goal is to develop progressive societies that will eschew terrorism as a tactic and be immune to global jihad terrorist recruitment, interaction with local constituencies is required even if all intelligence needs could be met by non-HUMINT means. Insurgencies quickly morph, and history has shown that even the ability to track and target everyone with a weapon would not necessarily prevent the success of a determined resistance on the level of a Palestinian Intifada or Gandhi's non-violent resistance campaign. The inescapable conclusion is that just as crop dusters can be essential in preserving the crop, a human on the ground is still required to accomplish the difficult work of plowing, nurturing, and harvesting.

Attacking the Enemy Above Without Looking Up

"But the hydra wound itself about one of his feet and clung to him. Nor could he effect anything by smashing its heads with his club, for as fast as one head was smashed there grew up two."
-- Apollodorus on Hercules (as translated by J.G. Frazer, 1921)

Insurgents are not wholly helpless in striking back against the overwhelming advantage of U.S. air power; they are singularly adept at wielding what T.E. Lawrence called, "the greatest weapon in the armory of the modern commander," the power of the press. The general criticality

of propaganda to the insurgent has already been outlined. Air strikes reinforce the romantic sympathies of many, which are enabled by the psychological portrait of a powerful and ruthless leviathan seeking to impose its will on the insurgent underdogs who are locked in a revolutionary struggle for their very lives—the image of "a giant flailing helplessly against ants".[11] Some of the negative reaction might also carry over from indiscriminate bombing tactics used in the past, including in counterinsurgency campaigns (such as British 'air control' doctrine prior to World War II).[12] The psychological asymmetry of being attacked from the air, often without warning and without any effective tactical recourse, is formidable to an insurgent but can be equally disconcerting to frightened civilians and viewed as disproportionate to international onlookers.

Insurgents play upon the historical sense of the indiscrimination of aerial bombardment and propagandize every strike that kills or injures, or can be made to appear to have killed or injured, noncombatants. Modern insurgents also have an established reputation for using civilians as shields for acute defense and to provide strategic propaganda should U.S. forces strike:

> One farmer told Human Rights Watch: The Taliban came to my village and forced us to stay close to them. The Taliban then came into my house and forced me and my family to stay with them. They then started firing their weapons at the Americans. The Americans then bombed my village. People in my village were getting killed because the Taliban would not let us leave.[13]

What David Gompert notes in general is equally pertinent for air strikes, "A paradox of counterinsurgency is that the use of force might weaken an insurgency, strengthen it, or both."[14] Anecdotal accounts confirm that air strikes resulting in civilian casualties have spurred embittered survivors to join the insurgency and have also spurred others to persecute or banish insurgent forces.[15] Even with the extraordinary care taken in planning U.S. air strikes, civilian casualties may still result from malfunctioning weapons, pilot error, or poor intelligence— sometimes intentionally planted to settle local feuds. Casualties are also likely exaggerated not just by insurgent forces but also by neutral civilians trying to take advantage of the U.S. policy of reimbursing survivors for civilian deaths suffered.

There are no credible studies as to the recruitment effect of civilian deaths, either real or virtual, but in many cases the military effect obtained was undoubtedly far outweighed by the propaganda effect suffered. This is especially true when one considers that the propaganda

quickly reaches a multitude of audiences and is not easily countered even when it is disputed by the U.S. military.[16] The potential adverse effects of an overreliance on firepower in counterinsurgent (and increasingly in conventional) warfare are well established. Indeed, for this reason, Rajesh Rajagopalan describes the proscription of heavy firepower as the first tenet of India's COIN doctrine noting that "Indian forces engaged in [COIN] operations get no artillery or close air support. And this principle has almost never been violated…"[17] Though not without its own advantages, air power is not immune to the requirement to constrain the use of force that is part and parcel of modern U.S. COIN operations. Since its greatest independent advantages are found in its ability to strike in a destructive role, its ability to dictate the outcome of a COIN effort is limited.

The Capabilities of Air Power in Counterinsurgency

> *"If our air forces are never used, they have achieved their finest goal."*
> *-- General Nathan F. Twining*

General air power capabilities for COIN operations can be segregated generically under destructive and constructive elements though some capabilities are mission dependent. Airlift, for example, could be considered constructive if it was delivering humanitarian supplies or reconstruction equipment, but it might be better classified as destructive if it were airdropping troops or supplies in support of a strike mission. For the purposes of this paper, those capabilities with an independent strike capability will be broadly described under the section relating to destructive capabilities, while those that function primarily in a supporting role are described under constructive capabilities.

Shake and Break: Destructive Capabilities of Air Power

> *"But man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated."*
> *-- Ernest Hemingway*

The ability of air power to strike ground targets in a precise and overwhelming manner is one of its greatest advantages in conventional conflict. Though with the considerable caveats established above, this same ability can be used to great effect in offensive COIN operations. As opposed to ground forces, air power can quickly destroy targets located anywhere throughout the area of operations and with little threat of ambush or incurring casualties. Modern precision

weapons are extremely accurate and can be employed relatively cheaply and flexibly as attachments to conventional 'dumb' bombs. Aside from the benefits of a precise hit on a target, these weapons also allow employment from high altitudes providing an increased stand-off capability that allows the delivering aircraft to operate outside of the most critical COIN weapons engagement zones.

The precise nature of modern air-delivered munitions as well as the growing flexibility in payloads when married to sophisticated planning protocols has allowed for the ability to greatly minimize civilian casualties for planned airstrikes. Though close air support missions for troops in contact are less successful in preventing civilian losses, a Human Rights Watch report on Operation Enduring Freedom, for example, found that:

> When aerial bombing is planned, mostly against suspected Taliban targets, U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan have had a very good record of minimizing harm to civilians. In 2008, no planned airstrikes appear to have resulted in civilian casualties. In 2007, it appears that only one planned airstrike resulted in civilian casualties. In 2006, at least one attack resulting in civilian deaths may have been a planned attack.[18]

The importance of discriminately targeting insurgents has been previously emphasized, and planned airstrikes are generally more effective in this endeavor than ground forces. The use of ground forces in the direct attack role is subject to significant fog and friction resulting from intelligence lapses, high emotions, dynamic conditions, and the difficulty of attaining complete surprise during raids. Air power can often mitigate these difficulties by surreptitious surveillance techniques and matching ordnance and employment parameters as required with no indication of attack until the munitions are delivered. Planned airstrikes follow a regimented and meticulous process:

> This includes a 'pattern of life analysis,' which looks for civilians in the area for hours or days before an attack using 'eyes on the target' ranging from ground observers to technical reconnaissance…. the U.S. and NATO also require positive visual identification of the target during a planned strike, allowing the pilot to look for civilians and call off an attack based on those observations. Planned strikes also allow the U.S. and NATO to develop a target over time, thereby using far more detailed intelligence to understand who is and is not in the target area.[19]

Airstrikes cannot capture insurgents or intelligence in an attack as ground forces can, and they are subject to insurgent propaganda even when successful, but they represent a compelling destructive capability when used in a disciplined and deliberate manner.

While much more likely to generate collateral damage than planned attacks, close air support is another critical destructive mission of air power. Close air support allows for the destruction of insurgent targets in contact with friendly forces, but it also helps shield the U.S. center of gravity by helping to minimize the number of coalition casualties. Close air support for troops in contact is the Air Force's top priority mission in Iraq and Afghanistan and through strengthening coordination between ground commanders and air command and control personnel, the agility to support short notice taskings has increased substantially as anecdotally reflected by the following report by an Air Force Colonel who commanded an Air Support Operations Group (ASOG) in Iraq:

> Ultimately, air-ground teamwork combined with perceptive intelligence work to reduce average TIC [troops in contact] responses of 20–25 minutes in the summer of 2004 to six to seven minutes throughout November, December, and January. Furthermore, in the nine months in which III Corps and the 3d ASOG formed the core of MNC-I's JFEC [Joint Fires and Effects Cell], the team boasted a perfect record by responding to all 811 TIC declarations.

Precision weapons combined with trained ground controllers allow modern close air support missions to be accomplished by virtually every strike-capable platform including B-1 bombers, which are routinely used in that role.

Though often exaggerated, strike air power can reduce the demands on coalition ground forces by filling strike requirements and by providing close air support to increase the available firepower. The extreme version of this argument is rooted in the British doctrine of 'air control' used during the 1920s and 1930s, and some enthusiasts argue for a similar air-heavy role in modern counterinsurgency.[20] Corum, however, persuasively concluded:

> Air control was never as effective as advertised, and it could not provide answers to the political causes of colonial insurgencies. Except in the case of minor policing, airpower served mostly as a support arm to ground forces. A colonial power in the 1920s could employ such a doctrine on the far reaches of the empire against natives who had no direct contact with parliament or the media.[21]

Since the main effort of a counterinsurgency will rely on constructive successes, the number of ground personnel that can be replaced by destructive airstrike capabilities is limited. The ability of air power to independently and persistently provide security to a local population is also immature. There is, however, some promise for air power to further reduce troop requirements in the future as the ability to track and 'tag' insurgents through the use of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets that also have a strike capability has been rapidly evolving.[22] As this capability is refined, planned airstrikes on insurgents who are tracked back to their cells may provide self-generating intelligence as well as the opportunity to avoid civilian casualties. This could relieve ground forces from some attack missions and reduce their numbers and casualties somewhat allowing them greater resources to devote to constructive missions.

A related potential advantage of air power in a destructive role is its ability to strike insurgent bases in otherwise untouchable locations. Air strikes when used in sovereign border nations such as Pakistan do not seem to generate as much controversy as ground incursions do. This is evidenced by the visceral and furious diplomatic reaction of Pakistan to a U.S. ground incursion on 3 September, 2008. Though U.S. airstrikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas also cause withering protests from the Pakistani government, there have been over 40 such 'suspected' UAV-launched attacks at the time of this writing—none of which have generated the level of protest that attended the single recognized ground incursion.[23] Insofar as airstrikes avoid civilian casualties, they are unlikely to generate the psychological reaction that would accompany an incursion by foreign forces.

Other destructive capabilities of air power are generally indirect and rooted in providing support to offensive ground forces. Air and space Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms, airlift of troops and materiel, Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Information systems (C4I), weather, navigation, and various other support capabilities empower the destructive capabilities of the entire joint team. ISR capabilities linked with airborne or ground precision weapons and airlift represent the two most viable means of reducing the number of ground forces required to conduct offensive operations in COIN.

If You Build It, They Will Leave: Constructive Capabilities

"Am I not destroying my enemies when I make friends of them?"
-- Abraham Lincoln

The ability of air power to make serious independent contributions towards meeting the constructive requirements of a successful COIN operation are by nature limited. Air power does not lend itself towards human interaction, which is a critical component of counterinsurgency. As one writer described it, "If success is ultimately tied to the people, I am sorry but they live on the ground. Their government operates on the ground, and people need to be secure to go about their lives. Until civilian populations take up residence in space or start to raise families at 10,000 feet, there will be limitations as to what airpower writ large, or the Air Force more specially [sic], can accomplish."[24] Military forces are by design ill-equipped to play a constructive role outside of providing security and training indigenous military forces and should not be utilized in such a fashion when more suitable civilian agencies and organizations are available. Though not without supporting constructive functions, air forces will find it even more difficult to transition to a nation-building role without transforming into something completely foreign to their nature and inept for their conventional purpose.

The most important independent constructive role for air power must be to help train, organize, and equip host nation airmen so that they may conduct counterinsurgency operations independently, or alongside coalition forces, and jointly with their sister services and other governmental agencies. This may seem to be an enabler for the destructive role that such a national force is more suited to play, but in reality the establishment of a credible indigenous air force has a tremendous positive psychological effect on the population. This effect is renewed each time indigenous forces are used instead of U.S. forces as long as the forces are considered legitimate and support a legitimate government. The success of this critical role is proportionate to the Air Force's ability to provide airmen who are well-versed in both their technical career field and the host nation culture and language. Related to this role would be Air Force assistance in building or modernizing the commercial air traffic sector, though this assignment would ideally be carried out by civilian aviation experts.

Air power, in both kinetic strike and non-kinetic roles, is also an important enabler for maintaining security in conjunction with ground forces. This ability can reduce the number of personnel required to secure an area and increase their mobility by lessening their dependence on

ground-based firepower and heavy protective vehicles. Airlift has long been recognized as a vital contributor to counterinsurgency warfare. It allows for the rapid insertion and extraction of personnel and equipment for destructive or constructive purposes. This might include missions such as humanitarian support, support for Non-Governmental Organizations doing reconstruction projects, and connecting government with remote regions of the country. Combined with strike air power that can provide increased firepower, airlift allows for small unit patrols and garrisoning in remote areas by providing resupply and exfiltration as well as aeromedical evacuation support. Airlift has been particularly critical in Afghanistan, a landlocked country with poor ground transportation infrastructure. In Iraq, airlift was used to decrease the greatest source of coalition casualties, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), by picking up much of the burden for intratheater logistical support: "by early 2005, Air Force C-17 and C-130 transports were lifting nearly 500 tons of cargo a day to remove some 400 trucks and over 1,000 drivers from the more dangerous logistics routes in the country."[25] Airlift provides rapid resupply for constructive projects and often allows access to remote areas that without government presence might become insurgent havens.

Air Force personnel can also be used interchangeably in many instances to support constructive roles that otherwise might be delegated to sister service or civilian counterparts. These include generic roles and roles for which an individual member is uniquely qualified. Air Force Civil Engineering and Security Forces personnel are ready examples and have been used in Iraq and Afghanistan in the same capacity as their counterparts in other services. Some have argued for a greater 'boots on the ground' capability for the Air Force to increase its constructive footprint, but this seems to be straining to create a mission for which, outside of a small number of personnel, the Air Force is neither designed for nor likely to have a comparative advantage at.[26] While utilizing suitable Air Force personnel in a surge capacity for undermanned missions is necessary and advisable, significant training and maintaining for the capacity to fill non-Air Force related roles is better managed by increasing the capability of the Army, Marine Corps, or other agency of primary responsibility.

Information operations are a prime capability for undermining insurgent propaganda and bolstering government legitimacy. The Air Force maintains the ability to broadcast independent or government-sponsored media messages via airborne platforms to influence the population and insurgents. Low-tech leaflet drops have also been utilized to some effect. Information

operations are one of the few constructive areas where there is great growth potential for the Air Force. There is not necessarily a decisive advantage that air power offers vis-à-vis information operations, but currently none of the services seem to be taking adequate measures to promote information dominance in conventional or COIN operations. To be effective, information operations require messages that are carefully crafted in terms of local culture and language; these messages are most effectively devised by indigenous personnel, but U.S. personnel should be prepared to produce messages independently or to assist host nation personnel who may not be trained or sociologically adept at collecting and disseminating information to local and national populations.[27]

Equipping for COIN: Pursuing the Illusion

> *"Beware lest you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow."*
> *-- Aesop*

With a discussion of current capabilities completed, it is appropriate to examine the question of whether procuring equipment that is geared towards fighting an insurgency and not a conventional war is advisable. The Air Force, along with the other services, has come under fire for its reliance on high-technology platforms that were programmed and developed largely during the Cold War to combat a conventional foe with an impressive combined arms capability across the board. Insurgent forces represent the opposite end of the spectrum: low technology, small decentralized cells to carry out attacks on military and non-military targets for political effect, and a modicum of the resources available to all but the most decrepit state opponent. While it is certainly true that an Air Force designed around counterinsurgency demands could be significantly less expensive than one geared toward meeting high-end conventional threats, assertions that low-tech forces actually offer an advantage over high-tech ones warrant scrutiny. This is especially true if one requires a full-spectrum force that continues to maintain a capability to defeat potential conventional opponents.

Traditionally, the overall force is largely designed around high-end conventional requirements and then platforms are used flexibly to meet the full-spectrum requirements of other levels of conflict. Given the previously outlined nature of insurgencies, it is unthinkable for an insurgency to demand the level of acute, violent air power response required in a conventional effort; to use strike air power so liberally would likely be deleterious in any case.

In theory this would indicate that insofar as strike requirements are concerned, the numbers and general capabilities of the conventional force should exceed those required for COIN. For illustration, shortly after the beginning of Operation Desert Storm, the Air Force had committed 693 aircraft for strike missions.[28] These aircraft struck a total of 41,309 targets during the 43 days of aerial bombardment.[29] In comparison, in all of 2007 there were 1,447 bombs dropped in Iraq, and in 2008 (as of 11 November), there were 2,983 airstrikes in Afghanistan.[30] Though many missions are flown without expending ordinance, the speed of modern fighter aircraft serve the requirement to provide area coverage for ground operations as aircraft can remain in orbits overhead or near statistically vulnerable areas and respond rapidly to requests for support. For airlift aircraft as well, large scale conventional requirements will exceed insurgency requirements. A RAND study of airlift requirements for future COIN operations found that "the current U.S. airlift fleet, organizations, and doctrines are suitable for performing the great majority of missions incumbent in counterinsurgency operations," while expressing reservations about the continued viability of the current fleet due to the sustained high operations tempo.[31]

Air Force platforms designed exclusively for COIN operations with the intent of 'economy of economy', as it were, are not likely to match the survivability or utility of their conventional counterparts during a high-end conventional war. Given that the United States may resize its military but is unlikely to turn away from maintaining a conventional capability until the death of conventional warfare has been absolutely ascertained by competent medical authorities (in historical terms, it has not even coughed), it faces the option of adapting conventional platforms during counterinsurgency operations, or of maintaining separate capabilities—one air force for conventional warfare and one for COIN, or some balance between these two extremes.

A frequent contention is that "instead of fast, expensive turbojets, [counterinsurgents] need reliable, propeller-driven aircraft designed to work in the environment favored by the insurgent."[32] Even as respected a COIN thinker as Galula concluded, "As for an air force, whose supremacy the insurgent cannot challenge, what it needs are slow assault fighters, short take-off transport planes, and helicopters."[33] At the time of Galula's writing, however, technology did not allow for effective spotting or targeting of insurgents from high altitudes and at high speeds, nor did insurgents have access to sophisticated anti-air weapons including anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS).

Modern precision sensors and weapons have enabled the attack capability of today's high-performance strike platforms to far exceed anything that the slower aircraft of Galula's time, or their updated cousins today, are capable of. An anecdotal illustration from an Army officer serving in Iraq is offered:

> On the day before the elections, [an F-15E flight] was focused on the periphery of the objective area since we'd already been on station for about 45 minutes and didn't need them in an area we already had control of on the ground. They spotted four runners that exited a house outside of our cordon and then they guided ground forces, my crew in this case, on to the targets who were hiding in the reeds under an overhang on the bank of the river. I'd walked in the dark within ten feet of one guy and [the aircraft] sparkled the target right behind me, told the TACP to tell me to turn around; I saw the beam through my [night observation device] and captured the first of four detainees. That was pretty Hooah![34]

The ability of precision guided weapons, including laser-guided bombs and Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM), to accurately destroy targets of interest is well established and has allowed virtually all strike aircraft to support Close Air Support (CAS) missions. In Iraq, for example, B-1 bombers have been frequently used in roles that were once the purview of dedicated CAS aircraft like the A-10 Thunderbolt that trained to fly at slower speeds and extremely low altitudes.[35]

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) represent a capability originally developed to meet conventional war requirements that has proven extremely versatile in a COIN role. UAVs provide real-time visual and extra-visual information to a variety of users while operating at medium to high altitudes; increasingly they can carry weapons for precision attacks, and they are usually imperceptible to the insurgents they track. Corum noted the difficulties of non-surreptitious aerial reconnaissance in his evaluation of the British Malaya campaign: "The guerillas, of course, presented a fleeting target—when they could be found at all—and aerial reconnaissance often alerted the guerillas to impending air attack. By the time strike aircraft arrived, the guerillas often had evacuated the target area."[36] Though aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance are not an adequate substitute for human intelligence on the ground, UAVs with increasingly specialized sensors and independent attack capability have

proven particularly useful in COIN operations and far exceed the capabilities of any available low-tech solutions.

Operating strike missions from the medium to high altitude environment using fast-moving aircraft with conventional defensive systems also greatly reduces the risk to crew and aircraft. Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. has suffered the loss of at least 36 helicopters to enemy fire as opposed to only two fighter aircraft—both during the initial invasion.[37] While a complete comparison would require more intensive investigation, there is no doubt that helicopters flying at slower speeds and lower altitudes are more vulnerable to enemy fire than fixed wing aircraft operating at higher altitudes and speeds.[38] Tactically, the most vulnerable time for most aircraft is in the takeoff and landing phases since their presence is implied in the airfield environment and they are low and slow. Small arms threats remain the most profligate for insurgent operations and 'low and slow' defines the parameters for successful small arms engagement. Though MANPADS threats posed by conventional adversaries, which ultimately trickle down to well-connected insurgents, continue to expand their lethal range, defensive systems have also become increasingly sophisticated and the reaction time afforded by flight at higher altitudes works to the benefit of the airman. The survivability of any conceptual 'low and slow' fixed wing aircraft against well-equipped insurgents is likely to fall somewhere between that of rotary wing aircraft and high performance fighters and to be directly related to the operating speed and altitude of the aircraft. In addition to threat avoidance, modern sensors are more effective when employed at higher altitudes, and GPS-guided bombs are most effectively employed from moderate to high altitudes.

Low-tech aircraft employing the same sensor and weapons technology of advanced fighters are not likely to be more tactically effective in COIN than high-end fighters. The most significant potential benefit of using COIN-dedicated assets while still maintaining the required conventional force is the reduced expense of operating low-tech aircraft as opposed to modern turbojet aircraft. Given that insurgencies are long-term commitments, such savings in fuel and maintenance costs could be considerable. Slower aircraft replacing high-performance platforms would, however, be required in greater numbers to provide comparable air coverage to ensure the same ability to respond to requests for support. Fighter aircraft are also more adept at influence tactics such as the common 'show of force' high-speed, low altitude flybys which have been successfully employed to disperse insurgents and riotous crowds in Afghanistan and Iraq. If

low-tech assets are purchased, ancillary expenses would include attendant personnel and support costs as well as an increase in the number of airfields or ramp space if existing fields were used. Bases are a frequent target of attack and the majority of bases are large, consolidated airfields with significant security personnel and measures in place. During periods of peace, these COIN-specific aircraft and their crews would still require support and training, just like their conventionally dedicated counterparts.

The low-tech argument is also frequently applied to airlift aircraft: "Helicopters and airlift aircraft that can land on short, unimproved airstrips are more useful than transport aircraft limited to large, fixed bases."[39] RAND's airlift for counterinsurgency study, however, concluded that, "Most of what airlift forces do in counterinsurgencies resembles what they do also in other types of war, albeit typically in different proportions."[40] Conventional requirements, for example, led to the development of the C-17 Globemaster III, a cross between a strategic and a tactical airlifter, to provide the ability to land on short, dirt runways. This unprecedented capability for such a large jet aircraft was made possible by advanced technology including blown flaps and a modern fighter-type Heads Up Display. Aircraft capable of landing on shorter, more austere runways than the C-17 and the workhorse C-130 Hercules are likely to have a very limited cargo carrying capacity greatly restricting their utility in other operations.[41] Added to that would be the need to build and maintain numerous acceptable landing strips in remote areas and to provide security for the strips.[42] The V-22 Osprey, again a high-tech solution based on conventional requirements, allows for insertion of troops into remote areas at higher speeds and less risk than helicopter insertion. Increasingly such forward-deployed forces are being resupplied by airdrop. Airdrop missions performed at low levels to ensure accuracy of delivery are exposed to the low altitude threats previously discussed, but technologically advanced methods including the Improved Container Delivery System and the Joint Precision Airdrop System now allow for medium altitude airdrops with unprecedented precision.

High-end conventional aircraft serve well in COIN operations and, while more expensive to maintain and operate, are more capable and less vulnerable than lower-tech options that would be appropriate for COIN but of little utility for conventional requirements. Economic efficiency can best be sought by rapidly standing up an indigenous air force that can conduct COIN missions unencumbered by the responsibility to maintain a world-leading conventional capability. To expedite this process, the Air Force is required to maintain at least a minimal

number of COIN-specific low-tech platforms to be used in training host nation forces. The degree to which the host nation will choose low-tech assets for COIN or high-tech assets for external defense will depend on its financial situation as well as perceived external threats. Iraq, for example, has requested to purchase F-16 fighters; Afghanistan would have little need or ability to pay for such high-end assets. The Air Force has lagged badly in its attempts to build or rebuild air forces in both countries; the likely price of this failure is a late checkout from those campaigns complete with extended-stay charges.

[1] Air power purists often point to Operation Allied Force over Kosovo as an example of a successful and unassisted air war, even though airmen leaders (including the Combined Force Air Component Commander, Lieutenant General Michael Short) were generally critical of the constrained way in which air power was used. Critics, on the other hand, note that the campaign was protracted beyond initial expectations, that it was unable to prevent an increase in Serbian military actions against Kosovars on the ground, and that the end of the conflict is more attributable to the loss of Russian support or the threat of ground intervention.

[2] Lewis D. Hill et al, *Gulf War Air Power Survey Volume 5* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993) section 5: 641, details numbers of aircraft lost by service, country, and type.

[3] This is the reason cited for the recent Air Force decision to mask deployment histories for future promotion boards.

[4] Statistics taken from "Faces of the Fallen: U.S. Service Members Who Died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom 2009," *The Washington Post* online available at http://projects.washingtonpost.com/fallen/branches/; Internet; accessed Feb 27, 2009.

[5] High-performance UAVs are a recent development and the Air Force has struggled to procure appropriate numbers and trained personnel to fill battlefield requirements, which have grown rapidly with the recognition of the ISR—and strike—capabilities of the UAVs. Global Hawk prototypes, for example, were rushed into Afghanistan before developmental testing was even complete. The Air Force is accelerating training for UAV pilots and is examining personnel policies including UAV career tracks and using enlisted personnel towards a goal of a continual capability to maintain 50 'orbits' in theater.

[6] Major General Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "Using Bad PR Is Taliban's Defense Against Airpower," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Sept 17, 2008): 15.

[7] Gryc makes the argument that Al Qaeda in particular functions beyond the network level in order to maximize operational security: "The dynamic paradigm mitigates the effects of what may be the biggest problem in terms of analyzing Al Qaeda using a network-centric view: the lack of transparency and information available about the network. No one can be sure about the strength of connections between nodes or how money is funneled. The dynamic paradigm states that links between cells are not important. Cells influence each other but are ultimately independent, only bound together by common goals and ideologies. The Al Qaeda training manual gives credence to this outlook by outlining how cells must train new recruits by ensuring they, and those training them, do not know each others' identities. This implies that direct connections between people and cells tend to be temporary and surface only when needed. Such a structure is only possible within dynamic systems, as networks tend to retain their connections over time." Wojciech Gryc, "Al Qaeda: Corporate Hierarchy or Biological Entity?" available at http://i2r.org/alqaeda.pdf; Internet; accessed Oct 16, 2008.

[8] Yaneer Bar-Yan, "Complexity of Military Conflict: Multiscale Complex Systems Analysis of Littoral Warfare" *Newport Center for Information Age Warfare Studies* (Apr 21, 2003) available at http://necsi.edu/projects/yaneer/SSG_NECSI_3_Litt.pdf; Internet; accessed 20 Sept 2008.

[9] Christopher M. Ford, "Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population's Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency," *Parameters* Vol. 35, no. 2 (Summer 2005) available at http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/parameters/05summer/ford.pdf; Internet; accessed Oct 20, 08.

[10] Christopher Bolkon and Kenneth Katzman, *Military Aviation: Issues and Options for Combating Terrorism and Counterinsurgency* (Congressional Research Service, 2005) available at http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/rl32737.pdf; Internet; accessed Nov 18, 2008.

[11] Terriff, 265.

[12] British experiments with air control over sections of their vast empire prior to World War II are sometimes held out by air enthusiasts as a model for the effective use of air power in COIN. Such arguments are misguided as the novelty of air power on what are more readily regarded as bandit hordes is not reproducible in modern COIN operations. Nor is the vicious extent to which Britain applied air power likely possible (certainly not morally desirable) in the post-war world where information is more readily available and true insurgents are masters in its manipulation. Corum and Johnson offer a similar opinion: "In the aftermath of Malaya, most British military authorities had concluded that 'the traditional method of disciplining restive natives [punitive expeditions, either by ground or air] had become not only politically unacceptable, but also an international embarrassment.' Bombing obstreperous tribesmen from the air offended modern sensibilities and was ineffective in the face of ideologically inspired rebellion. Air control was therefore ruled out as a viable and exclusive means to manage the insurgency." James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Air Power in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003): 205.

[13] *Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2008): 55.

[14] David C. Gompert, *Heads We Win: The Cognitive Side of Counterinsurgency (COIN)*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007): 2.

[15] Two illustrative incidents are provided in *Troops in Contact*, 27-28. An account of an air strike leading to joining the insurgency: "Two months after the raid, a man named Mohammadullah told a journalist that the airstrikes had killed 20 people in his village after Taliban fighters had come through. He said the bombing had killed six members of his family, including his children's grandmother, and wounded five. He believed the village was bombed in mistake because at the time insurgents were fighting U.S. forces well below the village. Villagers were so angered by the bombing that many men from the village reportedly left to join the insurgents. Support for the international forces 'depends on the behavior of ISAF,' he said. 'If they treat the civilians well, they will win.'"

An account of an air strike leading to anti-insurgency sentiment: "According to the villagers, the high loss of civilian life led to violence between the Taliban and local villagers. One villager told The New York Times that villagers had pursued the Taliban commander who led the ambush, Wali Mahmud, to the village of Heratian and had killed him. Another villager said he had heard that when Taliban fighters came to a village near Sarwan Qala with the aim of attacking international forces, a group of tribal elders asked them not to attack out of concern that the village would be bombed; after an argument, the leader of the tribal elders killed the Taliban commander and two of his bodyguards."

[16] An illustrative case is the alleged killing of 90 civilians in an air attack in Azizabad, Afghanistan in August 2008. Coalition sources originally assessed only 5 civilian deaths, but, upon investigation, Afghanistan and the UN both accepted the figure of at least 90 deaths and refused U.S. solicitations to participate in a joint investigation. The reinvestigation by the U.S. determined that 33 deaths were confirmed but the media generally reported the number as 90 throughout. The incident led to sharp demands from Afghan President Hamid Karzai to reduce air strikes and eliminate civilian casualties.

[17] Terriff, 263. The author uses the acronym 4GW for "Fourth-Generation Warfare" in the original text.

[18] *Troops in Contact*, 29.

[19] Ibid, 29.

[20] See, for example, Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "America's Asymmetric Advantage," *Armed Forces Journal* (Sept 2006) available at http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/09/2009013; Internet; accessed Sept 22, 2008.

[21] Corum and Johnson, 15.

[22] In a 9 September, 2008 interview on CNN, author Bob Woodward eluded to a classified program being used by the military to locate, target, and kill insurgent leaders. Some believe this may refer to the Continuous Clandestine Tagging, Tracking, and Locating (CTTL) program of Special Operations Command.

[23] Officially the U.S. does not confirm or deny Predator strikes in Pakistan, which are generally reported as 'suspected' U.S. airstrikes by the media.

[24] Frank Hoffman, "Non Cents," *Small Wars Journal* (May 22, 2007), available at http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/05/print/non-cents-1/ accessed Dec 20, 2008.

[25] Robert S. Owen and Karl P. Mueller, *Airlift Capabilities for Future Counterinsurgency Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007): 12.

[26] See, for example, Byrl L. Engle, *The Forgotten Force: USAF Security Forces Role in the Joint Counterinsurgency Fight* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University).

[27] 'Not sociologically adept' in this instance refers to personnel who have been socialized in systems where information is closely controlled, manipulated, and lacking in credibility.

[28] Hill, 27.

[29] Ibid, 418.

[30] Iraq statistics taken from Josh White, "U.S. Boosts Its Use of Airstrikes in Iraq" *The Washington Post* online (Jan 17, 2008) available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/16/AR2008011604148.html; Internet; accessed Jan 18, 2009; Afghanistan statistics taken from Jim Michaels, "Airstrikes in Afghanistan increase 31%," *USA Today* online (Nov 5, 2008) available at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-11-05-afghanstrikes_N.htm; Internet; accessed Jan 21, 2009—numbers reflect 2008 data through 5 Nov 2008.

[31] Owen, 59.

[32] See, for example, Arthur D. Davis, *Back to the Basics: An Aviation Solution to Counterinsurgent Warfare* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 2005). In this monograph the author explores the 'decisive' effects of air power in support of ground operations in insurgencies to support his recommendation that the U.S. purchase T-6 Texan aircraft for COIN. Unfortunately, his case is predicated on his chosen case studies of U.S. intervention in Vietnam and France in Algeria—both of which failed. He attempts to rectify this dichotomy by noting, "Although the French

granted Algerians their independence in 1962, the military side of the war proved successful and validated the French counterinsurgency effort with respect to air integration." Unknowingly the author touches upon the greatest philosophical handicap the U.S. military faces in COIN: understanding that victory in war is not necessarily predicated on tactical excellence in and of itself. The military must decide whether its priority is to be effective in battle or to win wars in cases where the former doesn't necessarily lead to the latter.

[33] Galula, 32.

[34] Howard D. Belote, "Counterinsurgency Airpower Air-Ground Integration for the Long War," *Air & Space Power Journal* (Fall 2006) available online at http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj06/fal06/belote.html#belote#belote; Internet; accessed Oct 10, 2008.

[35] Notably, the A-10 was also designed with survivability in mind (hence its unusual appearance) given the extremely high risk environment it is routinely exposed to in combat.

[36] Corum and Johnson, 194.

[37] One of the fixed wing aircraft lost to enemy fire was an A-10 which generally flies in the 'low and slow' environment. Helicopter statistics quoted from "Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," *The Brookings Institute's Iraq Index* available at http://www.brookings.edu/saban/~/media/Files/Centers/Saban/ Iraq%20Index/index20081120.pdf; Internet; accessed Dec 29, 2008. According to the index, there have been 67 American helicopter losses to all causes—the cause of several of the losses is still under investigation; figures are reported as accurate as of 19 November 2008.

[38] From Owen, 32: "In the face of advanced and future generations of light antiaircraft systems, the uncertain ability of rotary-wing aircraft to penetrate, egress, and survive over the urban 'canyons' of modern war presents food for tactical thought that should be undertaken and acted upon expeditiously."

[39] Kenneth Beebe, "The Air Force's Missing Doctrine: How the U.S. Air Force Ignores Counterinsurgency," *Air and Space Power Journal,* (Mar 1, 2006), available at http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj06/spr06/beebe.html; Internet; accessed Sept 27, 2008.

[40] Owen, 13.

[41] The Air Force has entered a contract to purchase 24 C-27J Spartan cargo aircraft. The C-27J can land on dirt strips of less than 2,000 feet in length, but only has the capacity to carry about 20,000 pounds of cargo and has a very modest range with cargo. The utility of the C-27 has been questioned by many including, apparently, an Intr-theater Airlift Force Mix study completed in 2007 by RAND, which suggested that it would be more cost effective to utilize C-130Js instead. Most details of the report were classified and the information above was taken from Allan Hess, "Military Airlift: The Joint Cargo Aircraft Program," *Congressional Research Service*, (Oct 10, 2008), available at http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RS22776.pdf; Internet; accessed 25 Mar 2009.

[42] A UK C-130, for example, was destroyed by an IED implanted in the runway while landing at a dirt strip in Iraq in 2007.

Chapter 3: Counterinsurgency and Conventional Warfare: Likelihood and Risk

"Every war is going to astonish you in the way it has occurred and in the way it is carried out."
-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Given the rapid transformation of the post-Cold War environment as catalyzed by the events of 9/11, many influential journalists, academics, and policy makers increasingly regard conventional warfare as passé vis-à-vis counterinsurgency warfare and postulate that U.S. forces must re-transform or risk irrelevance.[1] Some have even suggested that the nature of warfare itself has entered a new 'post-Clausewitzian' era marked by nonlinearity with "no definable battlefields or fronts", and the blurring of distinctions between peace and war, civilian and military.[2] Since it has already been shown that insurgencies in all their many guises are a very frequent form of conflict, it seems likely that continued U.S. engagement on one side or the other of insurgencies is foreseeable in the future just as it has been persistent in the past. Added to this, there are relevant COIN capabilities that apply to most conventional conflicts (the notion of conventional warfare may be a strained invention to begin with).[3] There are factors, however, that serve to mitigate the conceptual likelihood of U.S. involvement in future COIN operations vis-à-vis conventional warfare, especially expeditions on the scale of an Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom model.

Giving Up to Win: Insurgent Strategies for States

"Anything worth fighting for is worth fighting dirty for."
-- Unknown

One observation that would seem to support the future of more and larger COIN campaigns is that insurgency seems to have, as described in Chapter 1, a much better chance of success against a major conventional power, especially when that power is a liberal democracy, than conventional warfare does. One difficulty, however, with extrapolating this argument out to a new strategy for would-be U.S. opponents is rectifying theoretical obstructions surrounding the presumption that the strategy is even viable for a nation state. For a state actor to rely wholly on an insurgency strategy against a sizable conventional competitor would imply the willing cession of territory and all overt means of controlling the country including the ability to collect revenue

openly. This is markedly different from strategies of ceding space for time, as was used to great effect against both Napoleon's and Hitler's armies in their attempt to occupy and control Russia, a territory of vast expanses not afforded to most states. Especially in the case of Napoleon, indigenous Russian forces were particularly effective at harassing Le Grande Armée (though the harsh winter was even more compelling), but the overall success still rested on building a conventional stopping force and relying on conventional principles of interior lines and Napoleon's overextension well beyond his culminating point.

A strategy based primarily on insurgent warfare by an invaded state is historically the result of a failed conventional campaign that results in terms of surrender deemed unacceptable to either the regime, the people, or both—"in war the result is never final".[4] As a modern illustration, though Saddam Hussein threatened an insurgent campaign before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, this was likely little more than political posturing aimed at preventing an invasion. In the end, the government was overthrown as a result of conventional defeat and the ensuing insurgency may have been empowered by Hussein, but there is no evidence to suggest that it was ever controlled to any appreciable extent or for any appreciable period by him.[5] As Hussein's demise portrays, to elevate an insurgent campaign to the status of a national strategy would be extremely risky as the government would be forced to compete in exile with the occupying power and perhaps other popular reactionary groups. Especially when confronting liberal democratic opponents, it is more likely that losing or forgoing a conventional standoff and accepting conditions of peace will be seen as a more palatable option for all but the most desperate regimes.

Been There, Done That, Don't Want the T-Shirt: Escape from Iraq

> *"It is well that war is so terrible - otherwise we would grow too fond of it."*
> *-- Robert E. Lee*

If insurgency is not a likely strategy for a state competitor, it is possible if not probable that post-conventional warfare will still have to be followed by a counterinsurgency campaign. Neither Afghanistan nor Iraq was originally conceived of as a COIN campaign, yet both have transformed into wide insurgencies. There are, however, solid reasons that undermine the likelihood of another such effort anytime soon. One mitigating factor is the debilitating effect that the two wars have had on the U.S. national psyche and the military readiness of the country.

The wars have resulted in significant American casualties (compared to the conventional stage operations), tremendous financial expenditures, and a perceived loss of international prestige even as victory is still not assured in either conflict and no one knows for sure what victory will look like or how palatable it will be if it is attained. Difficult wars dampen enthusiasm for future wars unless the perceived threat is proportionately high. [6] The Vietnam experience is often cited as the catalyst for the turn away from non-conventional warfare, but it also led to a national disillusionment for all military adventures. When military force began to be employed more routinely again, it was in cautious but increasing doses—the 1983 invasion of Grenada, the 1986 air attack on Libya, and the 1989 invasion of Panama all preceded Desert Storm. In international relations parlance, Desert Storm represents perhaps the most clear cut case for going to war since World War II—Iraq had invaded a weak neighbor, international and even Middle Eastern opinion was almost unanimously against Iraq, the UN established a mandate for interstate war, and Saddam Hussein was one of the most easily vilified personalities on the planet. Overwhelming success in Desert Storm combined with the heightened sense of threat awareness after 9/11 were likely significant factors in producing initially high public and congressional support for the most recent actions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A similar pattern emerges on the 'small war' frontier. The loss of 18 U.S. Army Rangers in Somalia in 1993 led to a precipitate U.S. withdrawal quickly followed by a collapse of the entire UN effort to stabilize the failed state. In 1994, Rwanda became the scene of a horrific extermination program perpetrated by ethnic Hutus against the Tutsi population. The UN failed to act even as an estimated ten percent of the population of Rwanda perished. The former British ambassador to the UN, Lord David Hannay, explained the UN's paralysis by saying, "No one will ever understand Rwanda properly if they don't read it through the prism of Somalia. Why did the international community not do something? Because they were traumatized by the collapse of the mission in Somalia."[7] During the Bosnia and Kosovo crises, though the UN again failed to authorize meaningful measures to protect ethnic minorities, NATO, led by the United States, had no desire to revisit the embarrassment of Rwanda in its own backyard and resorted to limited action in the form of continuous air attack—a compromise intended to avoid another Rwanda as well as another Somalia. Given the trauma of Iraq and Afghanistan, it seems likely that, for the near future at least, the U.S. will take every opportunity available to avoid all but the most vital military operations, especially when the potential for committing large

numbers of exposed forces for an extended period is high. This thought is voiced by the current Secretary of Defense who speculated that, "The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan—that is, forced regime change followed by nation building under fire—anytime soon."[8] Whether or not public opinion and political determination will discriminate in particular against counterinsurgencies, nation building, interventions without UN backing, or other subsets vis-à-vis conventional combat or even air-power-intensive scenarios a la Operation Allied Force remains to be seen.[9]

Tutoring Failing States

> *"Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately it kills all its pupils."*
> *-- Louis-Hector Berlioz*

Even if the U.S. is unlikely to seek out nation-building adventures in the near future, there are many who argue persuasively that it is conceivable, if not likely, that it may have to intervene in failed or failing states to prevent instability which could lead to a power vacuum that then results in the establishment of a safe base of operations for Al Qaeda or other affiliated terrorist groups.[10] There are several obvious difficulties with U.S. involvement in shoring up failing or failed states. The first inevitable question that must be confronted is, "Why is it failing?" By definition, there is no surer sign of a loss of competence and legitimacy than that which accompanies a failing state. There may be events beyond the regime's control that exacerbate a crisis, such as drought and famine, but legitimate governments are expected to be able to plan for and react to such crises and generally have access to significant international aid. If the troubled government's flagging legitimacy is a result of incompetence or corruption, the U.S. is likely to be viewed unfavorably both locally and internationally if it attempts to shore up the regime, unless it can negotiate conditional support based on significant and rapid socio-political improvements. In any case, the introduction of armed forces on a large scale may further delegitimize the regime and result in irreconcilable tensions that result in combat operations (a mission creep similar to Somalia) or the demise of the regime requiring the forceful installation of a new government (such as Afghanistan or Iraq). To deploy combat forces in such situations is to accept significant risk; as Dunlap notes, "…there is something disquieting about deploying America's most authoritarian and socialistic arm, our armed forces, to teach struggling

foreign countries as to how to build social, political, economic, educational, and other democratic institutions."[11]

In counterinsurgency, patience and prudence are essential, and good intentions pave the way to hell with golden sidewalks poured by defense contractors at the expense of the American public. Hence, Raymond Millen's policy advice should echo true in the breasts of military and civilian leaders who both appreciate and despise the dirty work and substantial risk endemic to counterinsurgency, "The U.S. Government must remain cognizant of the substantive advantages an established government has over insurgents and not rush to intervene. The introduction of coalition ground forces carries ramifications above the rendering of security." [12] The preferred option would be to provide early financial, materiel, and moral support, predicated on host nation reform measures, with small groups of military and civilian advisers (on a scale closer to El Salvador than Iraq). This option also minimizes the inherent strategic risk of being too heavily committed to be able to react sufficiently to other potential world crises. Both the military and the Department of State, with its newly formed Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, seem to be moving in this direction at present.

Failed and failing states do not necessarily present an overwhelming advantage to terrorist enemies. Sovereignty issues are greatly mitigated allowing the U.S. to exercise greater discretion in directly attacking identified targets without sustaining the more taxing demands of providing security, prosperity, and good governance.[13] These states also generally exhibit a broad range of competing interests and violent factions so it is unlikely that an Al Qaeda-type organization would find itself uncontested and completely able to control the situation on the ground. Terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and its Taliban ally are most popular when they are threatening and promising rather than trying to govern. Internal cleavages in a failing state could be leveraged with low-level U.S. support to anti-terrorist factions or by utilizing such opposing factions as sources of intelligence for discrete U.S. counterterrorism actions.[14] Such efforts are considerably less risky and always leave more robust escalation available—how many Americans, for example, are likely aware of the current U.S. presence in the Horn of Africa, or actions against terrorists in places like Yemen or, 2008's inauspicious candidate for 'most likely to fail' (arguably ineluctably trapped in a 'groundhog's day' of failure), Somalia?[15]

For failed states or failing states with governments that should not be supported, the U.S. should consider that experience teaches that it is generally less expensive and risky to support an

insurgency than it is a counterinsurgency, just as it is easier to criticize than to govern and to destroy than to build. This is not a novel approach for the U.S.; as Romberg notes of the post-Vietnam era,

> Heeding the lessons of Southeast Asia for the remainder of the Cold War, Washington adopted a nimble strategy to keep boots off the ground in new hotspots in Asia and Africa, choosing to support local proxies instead of intervening itself. Applied to the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, the tactic defeated the Kremlin on the battlefield, adding to an increasingly unbearable set of economic and political stresses that ultimately led to the demise of the Soviet Union itself.[16]

Conversely, if large numbers of U.S. forces are introduced in an open manner to support a corrupt or unpopular regime or faction, it is likely that disparate groups will coalesce in a common cause resulting in increased influence for terrorist groups which maintain international notoriety and prestige as outspoken opponents of U.S. policies and values.[17] Metz observed that the underlying force of the Iraq insurgency was a reaction to the U.S. occupation: "While the Iraq insurgency has attempted political mobilization and the creation of united fronts and liberated zones in the Maoist tradition, they have largely failed. All that the various elements of the Iraqi insurgency agree on at this point is the destruction of the existing order."[18] The implication is that without the catalyst of U.S. presence, order may not prevail, but a monolithic insurgent entity is not likely to obtain either, and competing factions are consigned to struggle for power amongst each other. Moral obligations incurred by an occupying power make significant support likely after an Iraq-like campaign resulting in regime change, but such extreme situations should be avoided and, even when inevitable, there must be recognized limits as a people cannot easily be led to succeed or to become what their nature is not yet prepared to embrace.

Another significant factor that will tend to limit large U.S. expeditions abroad is the logistical difficulty or impossibility of stabilizing most failed or failing states. Army FM 3-24 posits that 20 counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents is the standard minimum required troop ratio for successful COIN efforts, though troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq have been significantly lower than this, even providing for indigenous military capability.[19] Pakistan is often cited as a potential failing state that, due to its demonstrated possession of nuclear weapons as well as its familiarity to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, could not be allowed to fail.[20] To militarily

secure a failed Pakistan would require a constant deployed force of nearly 3.5 million troops using the army's minimum suggested ratio against Pakistan's nearly 173 million person population. Even lower force ratios such as those used in Iraq (population of 28 million) or Afghanistan (population of 33 million) are untenable under current force assumptions given that Pakistan's population is well over five times larger than either of them. The force ratio must also take into account the cooperation or resistance of the population, which is likely to be even more unfavorable in any excursion into Pakistan than it has been in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Iran would present a similar problem with its population of nearly 66 million—twice as large as Afghanistan. Although there are signs that Iran's government doesn't enjoy a high level of internal legitimacy, it is difficult to conceive that a U.S. occupation following, for example, a military contest spawned over Iran's presumed development of nuclear weapons would require a lower troop ratio than current efforts in Iraq, which has been exceedingly difficult for the U.S. military to sustain over the long term.[21] Of the predominantly Muslim countries (the assumption being that Al Qaeda would not establish a base of operations in a non-Muslim country) that make it into the ignominious top 20 on Foreign Policy's 2008 Failed States Index, only Somalia, Sudan, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Lebanon have populations under 100 million (excepting Afghanistan and Iraq which are both on the list).[22]

The Likelihood of Conventional Conflict

"Only the dead have seen the end of war."

-- Plato

If there are mitigating factors that suggest that U.S. counterinsurgency efforts in the future are unlikely to be on the scale of current operations, there are also reasons to believe that the oft-advertised death of conventional warfare is both premature and exaggerated.[23] Assumptions that U.S. conventional supremacy has made conventional war obsolete ignore the basic nature of international relations and war. Just as fog and friction take their effect on the battlefield of conflict, they are also abundantly present in the realm of international relations. Despite political theories that are developed in the sterile laboratory of rational actors and perfect information, wars by their nature prescribe a more transcendent calculus. In any conflict, both sides resort to violence in the belief (or at least hope) that they will be able to attain a better state of peace than submission would produce. If a rational calculus could prevail then it would

always be possible for both sides to perfectly understand the exact costs and precise likelihood of success in war, and war would ultimately cease to exist. Victory would not have to be achieved, but only proven via theorem. War would then be replaced by computer algorithms and endless virtual wars that would entail no true risk to powerful states in accomplishing their ambitions. This would ineluctably lead to the sterile fulfillment of the Athenian description of power, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must".[24] Such a calculus is frustrated, however, by the expansive myriad of variables and unknowns that attend international relations at the grand strategic level of war and peace.

Stupid Happens: Miscalculating Your Way into Conflict

"England, unlike in 1914, will not allow herself to blunder into a war lasting for years.... Such is the fate of rich countries….Not even England has the money nowadays to fight a world war. What should England fight for? You don't get yourself killed over an ally."
-- Adolf Hitler (1939)

The first and most obvious reason an inferior military power would find itself in a pitched conventional battle with a vastly superior force is a miscalculation regarding the intentions of the superior power. Such is a reasonably sure explanation for the genesis of the 1991 Gulf War, Grenada, Panama, and a sizable portion of conflicts throughout history. In retrospect, it seems singularly irrational for these weaker nations to provoke a war with the United States, but it is unlikely any of them were prescient enough to understand how the U.S. would respond to their provocations. Similar events occur on a not-infrequent basis without precipitating U.S. interference—past terrorist events subsidized or supported by Libya, Syria, and Iran, or Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, genocide in Rwanda, or even Russia's recent drubbing of Georgia might be seen as equally egregious to the U.S. as the events that led to war in other instances. It is not difficult after the fact to point out differences in strategic interests, in U.S. leadership and capabilities, and in any number of other discriminating factors that led to war in one instance but not in another; but it is generally quite difficult to forecast with any degree of accuracy when, for what reason, and to what extent the U.S. will undertake military actions against a political opponent. Contributing to the complexity of the problem is the effect of domestic pressures on international decisions. Political leaders are nearly always constrained to prioritize domestic issues above foreign policy considerations, and weak regimes often look to focus attention outwards to consolidate national support. This irrational propensity vis-à-vis

foreign policy can strain relations leading to an increased risk of conflict, or even actual conflict such as the 1982 Falklands War, which was precipitated by the Argentine government's attempt to quell mounting domestic discontent by focusing public attitudes on a popular irredentist international dispute.

Even if a nation is confronting war with the U.S. and concedes a lopsided military advantage, like any adept insurgency it can effectively mitigate whether and with what degree of success the U.S. can bring its military might to bear through the adroit utilization of non-military influence. This introduces new sources for miscalculation. Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, for instance, the Iraqi government had found some reassurance in ambiguous U.S. remarks concerning its disputes with Kuwait.[25] It had also received U.S. and Arab support during its 1980-1988 conflict with Iran and may well have relied on the U.S. dependence on its deterrent effect as a counterbalance to Iran's influence. In the months leading up to the war, the Hussein regime made every effort to undermine the U.S.-led effort by manipulating U.S. and international opinion through evoking analogies of Vietnam, flaunting images of U.S. hostages, threatening an environmental crisis, and straining every nerve to implement any ploy available to confuse the calculus for U.S. and international decision makers.

Though now often viewed as a pre-war requirement, the UN-sponsored invasion of Iraq in 1991 was most remarkable for its singularity: after the UN-backed effort to repel the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 it marked only the second time the UN has authorized military force against an invading power.[26] Nichols describes the UN's inability to reach consensus on developing a mandate to use force by noting, "The United Nations was designed not to act but to stall; to force deliberation rather than reach quick consensus. It was never envisioned that the UN would *endorse* military action, but instead, at best, that it might *tolerate* such action under the most narrowly conceived limits."[27] Combining the political difficulty of developing a UN mandate to stop or reverse even egregious offensive actions with the increasingly requisite international legitimacy of doing so is unlikely to dissuade conflict either large or small; it may be more likely to actually result in more conflict as powerful nation states (especially liberal democracies) can be effectively prevented from UN-legitimized actions in all but the most egregious cases.

Even in that most rare of cases where consensus is obtained, or when unilateral action is undertaken, a weaker enemy is not without recourse. In Desert Strom, even after hostilities

commenced, Saddam Hussein continued attempts to fracture the alliance and undermine the support of international audiences by launching Scud missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia to inflict casualties, precipitate a ground attack, and perhaps involve Israel in the war; he also portrayed the air campaign as indiscriminate and barbaric while seeming to maintain a last hope that the Iraqi army would be able to inflict sufficient casualties during a ground battle to alter the strategic equation.[28] Even though Hussein was never under the illusion that his forces could match the U.S. casualty for casualty or battle for battle, by his reasoning that was not strictly necessary. Prior to the invasion of Kuwait, he had remarked to the U.S. Ambassador that, "Yours is a society which cannot accept 10,000 dead in one battle."[29] Fortunately, Hussein's grim hypothesis was never tested as U.S. casualties were much lower than even optimistic projections had anticipated. From following Hussein's actions over 12 years and through two conventional campaigns, it is obvious that a non-democratic regime with the resources of a nation-state can exercise similar asymmetries—usually to an even greater extent—to those that are available to insurgents. This fact also negates the likelihood of states resorting to insurgent strategies as a primary means to offset U.S. conventional capabilities.

If there are political factors that can be exploited prior to and during a military campaign, there are also military difficulties that always make war itself the realm of chance and uncertainty. Even assuming that the U.S. is likely to possess vastly superior forces to any potential conventional foe, given U.S. commitments around the world it is unlikely that the full might of the military can be brought to bear. In addition, logistical problems such as infrastructure, lack of forward operating bases, diplomatic clearances to use airspace, and time available can all work against U.S. efforts.[30] To use one possible contemporary scenario as an example, a strategically superior U.S. military could conceivably find itself facing an operational fait accompli if China was unabashedly determined to regain direct control of Taiwan. In such an effort, any U.S. qualitative advantage would have to be balanced against the tyranny of distance and the mismatch of *in-theater* resource availability between the U.S. and China combined, of course, with the difficult and costly proposition of retaking an island territory. Another significant asymmetry in a Taiwan scenario would likely be political will—presumably very high for China but likely a peripheral issue at best to most Americans.[31] While not matching the U.S. in global influence, growing powers such as China, India, and Russia are increasingly able to project significant regional military influence and international political and

economic influence. Again, using a Taiwan conflict as an example, U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan would be faced with angering either the U.S. or China by sponsoring or denying access to U.S. forces; without the use of bases in these countries, U.S. success would be inconceivable.[32] A large part of the calculation would be based on the likelihood of U.S. success and the long-term ramifications of angering China. Though the difficulties are most exaggerated by near-peer competitors, the same difficult calculus applies to smaller states.

Fixing What Isn't Broken or Breaking What Isn't Fixed?

"For if we merely take what obviously appears the line of least resistance, its obviousness will appeal to the opponent also; and this line may no longer be that of least resistance. In studying the physical aspect, we must never lose sight of the psychological, and only when both are combined is the strategy truly an indirect approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's balance."

-- Sir Basil H. Liddel-Hart

If the premise that conventional war is somehow rendered obsolete by the qualitative advantage of the current U.S. military is universally accepted, it would seem counterintuitive and irrational for other large powers to continue to devote scarce resources towards maintaining or even expanding their conventional capabilities. This is especially true for states that already have sufficient capabilities to dissuade, deter, or defeat traditional or likely regional competitors. China, for example, has increased its defense budget by double digit percentages for 19 years including the 2008 increase of nearly 18 percent. Russia, fresh off its conflict with Georgia, announced and approved a 25 percent increase in defense spending for 2009 even given the paralyzing financial difficulties it is currently experiencing.[33] Other regionally powerful states such as India and Brazil continue to modernize and grow their armed forces at respectable rates as well. This is not to imply that any of these nations are seeking to challenge the U.S. in the near or distant future. Russia's military expenditures are just as likely to reflect a realization of, and attempt to remedy, deficiencies evidenced during fighting in Georgia, while neither India nor Brazil's overall defense spending yet surpasses two percent of overall GDP. There are also potential threats (including each other in the case of China, Russia, and India) outside the U.S. that may validate the need for increased capabilities. All of these countries also seek regional or global prestige through a balanced economic and military capacity with India and Brazil being persistent contenders for a permanent Security Council seat in UN reform proposals. If their current motives should not be presumed to be sinister, however, then neither should any future

intentions be dismissed out of hand. Military planning is most conservatively done based on existing and predicted capabilities with a blind eye to intentions, which can change too rapidly for an adequate reactionary response. It is likely that the relative imbalance between the U.S. and China especially will continue to shrink. Put in a regional context, the imbalance is already likely to be perilously small—probably too small already to maintain a deterrent effect in the Taiwan Straits by military calculations only.

The biggest concern for the future should not be current threat assessments or a specific peer or other competitor, but that that the logic of warfare itself may be discarded. Warfare is like water flowing through even small crevices and cracks constantly seeking out the path of least resistance. The risk is that if the capabilities of current conventional forces are compromised in order to focus on the warfare de jure of large nation-building counterinsurgency efforts, other actors are likely to take advantage of this weakness in pursuit of their interests.[34] This is unlikely to involve a direct encroachment on vital U.S. interests, but it could well cause the U.S. to continually redefine and lower the standard of U.S. interests based on the likely price to be paid to defend them. If one believes that some degree of international peace and stability is maintained by the guarantee of overwhelming U.S. conventional dominance, the diminished likelihood of conventional warfare should not then be used lightly to argue for the reduction of current conventional capabilities. To argue thus is the logical equivalent of contending that the threat of Mutual Assured Destruction rendered nuclear weapons unusable, therefore the U.S. should not waste defense dollars to maintain nuclear weapons which would never be used. The greatest benefit of nuclear weapons is found in their capability to render their own form of warfare obsolete—as General Omar Bradley stated, "The way to win an atomic war is to make certain it never starts"; perhaps the same is true to some extent of the utility of maintaining an unquestionably superior conventional force. The necessity to continue to provide substantial conventional deterrence is underlined by remarks made in 2008 by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who, in an attempt to provide warning to Iran to stem its meddling in Iraq, pointed to reserve capabilities in the Navy and Air Force that could deal with Iran if needed.[35]

Globalization and Conventional War

"Globalization is a fact of life. But I believe we have underestimated its fragility."
-- Kofi Annan

Some point to globalization as even more central than military asymmetries in deterring future conventional conflicts, at least among major powers. Global interdependence may well serve to dampen enthusiasm for some military adventures by escalating perceived costs, but it is not likely to lead to the end of conventional conflict and may even serve to generate or exacerbate conflict in some contexts.[36] Interdependence is always a two-way street; if it is true that a strained or broken relationship would negatively affect one party, it would also presumably affect the other party. This gives apples-and-oranges degrees of leverage to both sides often making the previously referenced rational calculus of war and peace that much more difficult to divine.

In Russia's recent invasion of Georgia, the financial ramifications to Russia were epic—the stock market value plunged over 50% within weeks of the August 2008 invasion as foreign direct investment hemorrhaged effusively. The stock market was, however, already in a precipitous decline, and shortly after Russia's crash, many other large markets crashed due to problems ostensibly originating within U.S. financial markets. The true impact to Russia is therefore hard to glean and it is impossible to determine at present how long lasting it might be. Equally enigmatic is whether or not Russian Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev understood and accepted the economic ramifications of their actions or if they simply miscalculated. Certainly not lost on them or on European leaders was their ability to leverage Russia's stranglehold over European energy markets to mitigate Europe's propensity to provide any significant support to Georgia. Russia may have also felt inclined to utilize its military muscle to help reestablish its prestige and international position in light of its reduced economic and political significance within Europe. Russia's gross economic muscle may be diminutive compared to the United States or the European Union, but its regional military might remains formidable. One negative lesson to be taken is that economically weak nations can enlarge their prestige through military capability and will. The cheaper, though no less disconcerting, version of this is manifest in the quest for nuclear weapons as famously articulated by India's Army Chief of Staff who, when asked by reporters what he had learned from observing the U.S. defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, replied, "Don't fight the Americans without nuclear weapons."[37]

Globalization is not a new phenomenon; indeed some form and degree of globalization has been extant for millennia tracing back through the likes of Dollar Diplomacy, Commodore Perry's Black Ships, the East India Company, Rome's extensive commercial relations, and the Silk Road.[38] While new technologies such as the internet and the spread of commercial air travel have made it more pervasive and more nimble, it is impossible to tell yet whether and to what degree the new globalism will have its ebbs and flows like previous eras.[39] Even in the U.S., popular perceptions regarding the benefits of globalization have deteriorated; a 2008 Pew Global Attitudes survey found that "enthusiasm for economic globalization has waned considerably over the last few years in many wealthy nations, especially in Western Europe and the United States" and "the ebbing of enthusiasm [towards international trade] has been particularly dramatic in the United States, home to the world's largest economy."[40] The years preceding World War I are also characterized as an era of great globalization even by most contemporary proponents of the inevitability of globalization, yet this era of globalization imploded giving rise to history's two most devastating worldwide conventional conflicts and an unparalleled global depression.[41] In response to the postulations of Thomas Friedman and Francis Fukuyama, John Gray concludes that globalization does not "augur an end to nationalism or great-power rivalries…. In fact what it is doing is creating new great powers, and this is one of the reasons it has been embraced in China and India."[42] Globalization as it has evolved today is significantly attributable to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar global competition that characterized the Cold War. This makes it a relatively short-lived evolution at present. The mutual interaction between globalization and significant historical events such as hegemonic power shifts or global economic downturns (such as the world is experiencing at the time of this writing) remains indiscernible. Whether Friedman's 'flat world' of globalization is the next step in the elusive quest for the 'end of history', which will lead to the end of great power wars, or whether Gray's 'round world' theory will prevail cannot yet be determined; and because it is indeterminate, the need for robust conventional forces remains.

[1] Downes, for example, opines: "…learning from Saddam Hussein's mistakes in 1991 and 2003, potential foes will wage irregular warfare, hoping to capitalize on America's supposed sensitivity to casualties and impatience with protracted campaigns." Alexander B. Downes, "The Origins and Effectiveness of Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Strategies," *Civil Wars* Vol 9 No 4 (Dec 2007): 314.

[2] W.S. Lind et al refer to this new type of warfare as "Fourth Generation Warfare." William S. Lind et al, "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation" from *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict: Debating Fourth-Generation Warfare* eds. Terry Terriff, Aaron Karp, and Regina Karp (New York: Routledge, 2008): 13-20.

[3] Secretary of Defense Robert Gates notes, "even the biggest of wars will require 'small wars' capabilities." Gates, 30.

[4] Clausewitz, 80. This paragraph also notes "The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."

[5] Hussein, for example, released thousands of violent criminals prior to the invasion and the Saddam Fedayeen, a brutal internal security paramilitary force, did carry out guerilla attacks against coalition forces during and after conventional phases of the war. Added to this, Iraq was awash in arms and explosives. It is dubious, however, whether any significant groups maintained loyalty to Hussein as opposed to simply being galvanized by ethnic, religious, or political factors.

[6] Francis Fukuyama, for example, writes, "…how ready is the U.S. to again intervene unilaterally to topple a rogue state proliferator and engage in another nation-building exercise? The answer comes from the Bush administration itself, which has already backed away from military confrontations with both North Korea and Iran in favor of multilateral approaches, despite much clearer evidence of nuclear programs in those countries." Francis Fukuyama, "The Bush Doctrine, Before and After," *Financial Times*, online edition (October 10, 2005) available at http://us.ft.com/ftgateway/superpage.ft?news_id=fto101020051536392560; Internet; accessed 11 Dec 2008.

[7] As cited in Thomas M. Nichols, *Eve of Destruction: The Coming Age of Preventive War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 24.

[8] Gates, 29.

[9] A 2004 poll conducted by the Marshall Fund indicated that 82 percent of Europeans and 58 percent of Americans would support military intervention in a "future Iraq-like situation" if UN approval had been received implying that aversions to war may be tempered depending on the circumstances. Cited from Nichols, 111.

[10] Again, Gates writes, "The recent past vividly demonstrated the consequences of failing to address adequately the dangers posed by insurgencies and failing states. Terrorist networks can find sanctuary within the borders of a weak nation and strength within the chaos of social breakdown. A nuclear-armed state could collapse into chaos and criminality. The most likely catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland -- for example, that of a U.S. city being poisoned or reduced to rubble by a terrorist attack -- are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressor states." Gates, 30.

[11] Major General Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., "Roles, Missions, and Equipment: Military Lessons from Experience in the Decade" *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Jun 2008) available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200806.dunlap.militarylessons.html; Internet; accessed Jan 13, 2009.

[12] Millen, p. xi.

[13] Perhaps the most difficult dilemma is in dealing with nation states that have failed or failing regions that are effectively untouchable, such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. This presents the U.S. with the inability to control terrorist groups through pressure on the host government, which is demonstrably ineffective, while also constraining its ability to freely combat terrorists due to the complications presented by issues of sovereignty, which may lead to the worsening of an insurgency.

[14] Consider, for example, Bennett Romberg's brief characterization of post-9/11 Somalia and the difficulty faced by internal Islamic factions: "Unwilling to risk another 'Black Hawk down' incident or worse, Washington covertly assisted warlords and backed Ethiopia's 2006 military intervention to ferret out terrorists and defeat the Islamic Courts Union, the radical militia that had taken control of much of Somalia. These efforts failed, and the United States' targeted killings had mixed results, eliminating some suspected terrorists but enraging the Somali population in the process. However, as of this writing, the Islamists can take little solace: although they face no competition from Somalia's internationally recognized but dysfunctional Transitional Federal Government, they remain divided in an anarchic land." Bennett Romberg, "The Precedents for Withdrawal," *Foreign Affairs* (Mar/Apr 2009): XX.

[15] According to Foreign Policy's Failed States Index 2008, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cm**Error! Reference source not found.**s.php?story_id=4350&page=1; Internet; accessed Jan 1, 2009.

[16] Romberg, 7.

[17] Thornton observes the same tendency: "Indigenous and disparate people have always united in loose affiliations to defend their own spaces against foreign intervention." Thornton, 89.

[18] Steven Metz, *Learning from Iraq: Counterinsurgency in American Strategy*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007): 77.

[19] From Army FM 3-24, p. 1-13, "Twenty counterinsurgents per 1000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations; however as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation." Iraq is finally approaching this level with the size of the Iraqi armed forces now exceeding 250,000. If police forces are added, the total number is around 600,000.

[20] The *Joint Operating Environment 2008* listed Pakistan as one of two near term strategic nightmare scenarios in the making: "In terms of worse-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico." *The Joint Operating Environment 2008: Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force* (Suffolk, VA: United States Joint Forces Command Center for Joint Futures [J59], 2008): 36.

[21] Measures of legitimacy are influenced greatly by real or perceived external threats making it impossible to accurately forecast how the Iranian public would react to limited or extensive military intervention to debilitate their nuclear program or destabilize the existing regime.

[22] Foreign Policy Failed States Index 2008.

[23] Even Air Force doctrine repeats this argument: "The United States' overwhelming dominance in recent conventional wars has made it highly unlikely that most adversaries will choose to fight the U.S. in a traditional, conventional manner." *Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3*, 1.

[24] Strassler, 352.

[25] On July 25, 1990, Hussein met with U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie. In their conversation, Glaspie noted the growing contentions with Kuwait, "But we have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait. I was in the American Embassy in Kuwait during the late 60's. The instruction we had during this period was that we should express no opinion on this issue and that the issue is not associated with America. James Baker has directed our official spokesmen to emphasize this instruction." "Excerpts From Iraqi Document on Meeting with U.S. Envoy," *The New York Times International* (Sept 23, 1990) available at http://chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/glaspie.html; Internet; accessed Dec 16, 2008.

[26] The UN has voted to allow the use of military force in peacemaking operations such as Somalia, but (no doubt partly due to the difficulties encountered in Somalia discussed earlier) failed to take action in other crises such as Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

[27] Italics in original. Nichols, 120.

[28] The Battle of Khafji in Saudi Arabia was one of the only offensive actions undertaken by the Iraqi army and was probably intended to force the coalition to begin the ground war.

[29] "Excerpts From Iraqi Document on Meeting with U.S. Envoy". Osama Bin Laden drew the same conclusion from America's rapid withdrawal from Somalia after the loss of 18 servicemen.

[30] One of the military difficulties of maintaining a large number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, for example, is its geography—no sea access and no favorable overland access (convoy routes and staging locations through Pakistan are constantly attacked).

[31] Americans also tend to have a distorted image of China's actual power—a Feb 2008 Gallup Poll found that 40% of Americans think that China is the world's leading economic power, surpassing the 33% that listed the U.S. even though objectively the U.S. GDP is four times that of China. Such perceptions would likely reinforce a public view that Taiwan is not worth a war with China. Available at http://www.pollingreport.com/trade.htm; Internet; accessed Dec 17, 2008.

[32] Cultural issues currently mitigate some of China's influence, especially in Japan, which is wary of increasing Chinese influence in the region. Russia's displeasure at NATO expansion and ballistic missile defense cooperation represents another example of asymmetric regional influence as European powers have been reluctant to support Georgia and Ukraine's entry into NATO.

[33] "Russian Defense Budget May Rise 25% in 2009," *USA Today*, available at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-09-19-Russia-defense_N.htm; Internet; accessed Dec 17, 2008.

[34] This assessment is voiced by Mark Helprin who criticized the Bush administration with the incompetent prosecution of simultaneous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: "This confusion has come at the price of transforming the military into a light and hollow semi-gendarmerie focused on irregular warfare and ill-equipped to deter the development and resurgence of the conventional and strategic forces of China and Russia, while begging challenges from rivals or enemies no longer constrained by our former reserves of strength." Mark Helprin, "Bush Has Made Us Vulnerable," *The Wall Street Journal* (Dec 19, 2008): 17.

[35] See Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. Weighing Readiness for Military Action Against Iran," *Washington Post* (Apr 26, 2008): A07.

[36] Thomas P.M. Barnett, for example, while maintaining the inevitability and desirability of globalism on a par with Thomas Friedman or Francis Fukuyama, argues that future conflicts will occur increasingly between globally networked 'Functioning Core' states and increasingly desperate 'Non-Integrating Gap' states that have not successfully globalized and continue to fall further behind in economic, political, and social development leading to increasing discontent. Thomas P.M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004).

[37] "India-Pakistan Background and Threat," available at http://usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa010202a.htm; Internet; accessed Dec 26, 2008.

[38] Just as negative connotations of imperialism were associated with some of these types of globalization, many today also view globalization negatively including those such as Al Qaeda that equate it with American hegemony and violently resist it.

[39] For arguments against the viability and/or favorability of globalization see, for example, John Gray, "The World is Round", *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 52, No. 13 (Aug 11, 2005): 13-15; and Jeffrey G. Williamson "Globalization, Labor Markets and Policy Backlash in the Past," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Autumn, 1998): 51-72.

[40] Andrew Kohut, "Assessing Globalization: Benefits and Drawbacks of Trade and Integration," *Harvard International Review* online available at http://www.harvardir.org/articles/1727/; Internet; accessed 17 Dec 17, 2008.

[41] See Michael D. Bordo, "Globalization in historical perspective: Our era is not as unique as we might think, and current trends are not irreversible," *Business Economics* (Jan, 2002) available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1094/is_1_37/ai_83793969; Internet; accessed Dec 16, 2008.

[42] Gray, 14.

Chapter 4: Recommendations

"The laws of war—this is a problem that anyone directing a war must study and solve.
The laws of revolutionary war—this is a problem that anyone
directing a revolutionary war must study and solve.
The laws of China's revolutionary war—this is a problem that anyone
directing a revolutionary war in China must study and solve."
-- Mao Tse-Tung

This paper concludes with recommendations for conceptual-level refinements regarding how the Air Force, and at times the military in general, might better ensure a balanced full-spectrum capability to meet current and future war fighting requirements. The overall recommendations summarized are 1) Understand and accept the relevance of air power in COIN and conventional warfare, 2) Neither focus on nor neglect COIN-specific requirements in future development, 3) Better educate officers on the operational and strategic levels of warfare across the spectrum of conflict, and 4) Return to beginning with strategy and operational art to address military quandaries. The force structure implications of these recommendations are minimal and largely evolutionary. In keeping with the original purpose of this paper, specific platforms and tactics will not be introduced or advocated, only conceptual ideas relating to force planning are presented.

Knowing Limits and Not Limiting Strengths

"Hard pressed on my right. My center is yielding. Impossible to maneuver.
Situation excellent. I am attacking."
--Ferdinand Foch-- at the Battle of the Marne

The first recommendation, to understand and accept the relevance of air power in COIN and conventional warfare, applies equally to Air Force, sister service, and national policy decision makers. Clausewitz warned of the prime necessity of not "mistaking [war] for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."[1] As it is for war, so it is for the instruments of war, and any attempt to make the Air Force ultimately decisive in COIN operations is likely to violate both of these principles. There is no reason to believe that conventional air power capabilities are incapable of responding to current and projected COIN requirements. Indeed, the greater risk is that strike assets in particular will be overly utilized or emphasized in an effort to impose a military solution on a COIN problem. This is illustrated by

the overreliance on firepower in Vietnam under the guise of sending "a bullet (or a shell, or a bomb) rather than a man wherever possible; indiscriminate use of airpower and artillery made many peasants more inclined to favor the Viet Cong than the [Government of Viet Nam]."[2] Aside from destructive capabilities, the Air Force acts as an enabler and support arm in the constructive requirements of COIN. As one author noted regarding remaking U.S. COIN capabilities: "For air forces, and to an even lesser extent for navies, there is not much radical adjustment to be made; they will continue to play vital, but supporting roles."[3] Efforts to radically bend Air Force capabilities to constructive purposes are likely to be expensive, redundant, and ultimately ineffective.

Assertions that the Air Force is less relevant to current conflicts (presumably as opposed to past conflicts), even given that they are greatly exaggerated, carry some merit, just as the same assertions would apply to the Navy (separating the role of the Marines). Similar critiques could be made of each service branch during different conflicts during recent history.[4] What was the proximate relevance of the Army to Operations El Dorado Canyon, Northern Watch, Southern Watch, or Allied Force? What is the relevance of the Marine Corps to maintaining nuclear deterrence? The U.S. should be comfortable having separate services that encompass myriad capabilities with genetic strengths and limitations; this arrangement provides great strategic and operational flexibility across a wide spectrum of warfare and requires any potential opponent to ponder the variegated options the U.S. has when it resorts to military force.

The inexorable danger of persisting arguments of irrelevance is that they presume that the nature of warfare has ineluctably changed and that all future wars will look like current wars. Truly the world has changed since September 11, 2001, but to determine in such a short blink of history that warfare has made a generational shift rendering current capabilities irrelevant is an audacious leap of logic that would engender extraordinary risks if conventional war is not really dead but only sleeps. Perhaps a most optimistic case analogy is that major conventional war is indeed currently tenuously bound by the chains of American conventional superiority; but how much rust can the chains sustain before the beast breaks lose? Nowhere is this risk more keen than in an Air Force that would be persuaded or forced to abandon the unprecedented asymmetrical advantage it enjoys over the military forces of any other entity on the planet to pursue the myth that it can fight and win a type of warfare that is against its doctrinal, its theoretical, and its experiential applicability. To be sure, there are contributions the Air Force

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can make—most of them it already excels at, but these are constrained by the nature of insurgent warfare. To put the Air Force on the Procrustean bed of counterinsurgent warfare requirements and start stretching and chopping would be the strategic equivalent of requiring all future Navy vessels to also have wheels so that they can be more relevant in places like Afghanistan.

Arguments that the equipment of the Air Force and other services are too Cold-War oriented are ill-conceived red herrings. The Cold War was characterized by the all too frequent employment of forces and support to wars small and large. As unfamiliar as it is, today's strategic landscape is certainly no more strewn with national security landmines than it was during the heady days of the Cold War. Al Qaeda and Islamic extremism are not the strategic equivalent of Soviet Communism with its ideology of world domination, its demonstrated ability to devour neighboring nation states, its overarching worldwide influence that dictated reactionary U.S. foreign policy for nearly half a century, and its conventional and nuclear arsenal that continually threatened the consumption of Europe and the destruction of civilization. Al Qaeda must be put in perspective; at present it appears analogous to a morphed global insurgency, perhaps more similar to, though certainly more capable than, late-19th century anarchist movements, relying on small groups or even individuals united by a common fundamental ideology. Anarchists also enjoyed many highly-publicized successes, notably the killing of high-profile figures in Russia and President McKinley's assassination in the U.S., and this movement marked the origin of the concept of 'propaganda of the deed' so integral to contemporary terrorist operations. The potential of Al Qaeda demands its purposeful confrontation, but, unlike the U.S.-USSR match-up, it is far from an existential threat and is not likely to circumscribe all other conventional state competition in the way that the Cold War did—the opposite may prove true as state actors see a window of opportunity in the current conflicts that have stretched military resources thin and made national will amorphous.

Peripheral Vision and Comparative Advantage for COIN

*"By means of glasses, hotbeds, and hotwalls, very good grapes can be raised in Scotland,
and very good wine too can be made of them at about thirty times the expense
for which at least equally good can be brought from foreign countries.
Would it be a reasonable law to prohibit the importation of all foreign wines, merely to
encourage the making of claret and burgundy in Scotland?"*

-- *Adam Smith*

The second recommendation is that the Air Force should neither focus on nor neglect COIN-specific requirements in future development. The Air Force does not enjoy a comparative advantage in developing *constructive* COIN capabilities vis-à-vis the Army or the Marine Corps. Contemporary conventional air power weapon systems have thus far proven more than adequate to accomplish any reasonably expected military role required in defeating insurgents. Insurgency itself teaches that military superiority will not overcome ideological attractiveness— to think otherwise is to ignore deeply held American values incubated in our own ideological revolution. While it may be true that cheaper weapons can still be effective, they are unlikely to be as effective as their high-end counterparts; they are just as unlikely to be decisive even if procured in greater numbers; and they will require the U.S. to either maintain two militaries or assume away high-end conventional conflict.[5] Though using conventional platforms for COIN is not as economically efficient, effective COIN should seek to intervene early and only commit small numbers of U.S. forces—what Vick et al label 'precautionary counterinsurgency'.[6] Large scale nation-building COIN is an extremely risky enterprise and, given the current stigma attached to Iraq and Afghanistan, is unlikely to be readily repeated. Given that land-based forces do have the comparative advantage by virtue of their ability to leverage constructive capabilities, questions relating to what types of systems to procure and how to organize are likely to be much more of a Gordian knot for them.

Nagl and others have asserted that "the demands of conventional and unconventional warfare differ so greatly that an organization optimized to succeed in one will have great difficulty in fighting the other."[7] If that is truly the case, the nation may become even more reliant on the comparative conventional advantages of the Air Force as the conventional capabilities of the Army and Marines in particular may atrophy in the wake of expanding its versatility vis-à-vis constructive COIN operations.[8] One potential area that is critical to effective constructive COIN operations that no service seems to have a proven comparative advantage in

yet is information operations. With proper coordination the Air Force may well be appropriate to fill this joint niche, at least as well as ground forces could do, thus enabling it to free up overtasked Army and Marine Corps resources during a COIN struggle. Information operations are also a vital conventional capability and have long been neglected by all the services; it is thus a growth industry and the Air Force's technology orientation may make it an appropriate lead.

As new Air Force systems are programmed, they should continue to be predicated on the greatest threats developed by other nation-states. This will ensure that the Air Force continues to maintain adequate capabilities to operate across the threat spectrum. New systems should also, however, take into account other levels of conflict and integrate promising technologies when they do not detract from conventional capabilities. Given that all insurgencies have 'conventional moments', and vice versa, it is unlikely that there are air power related systems that are specific only to insurgencies, though greater weight may be placed on certain capabilities during an insurgency. One of the greatest capabilities for further exploitation at present appears to be in ISR capabilities, especially using UAVs, and reasonable investments in advancing both the number and capabilities of these platforms is prudent. UAVs represent persistence, economy, flexibility, and the ultimate in operator security. Though the Air Force has struggled in this area, UAVs are conventionally-driven requirements and will prove useful in future conventional conflicts as well as in non-kinetic uses from Humanitarian Relief Operations to Peacekeeping Operations. In the rare case where capabilities are not relevant across the spectrum, spectrum interoperability should be engineered where able. As an example, if sensors required for insurgency are not common to those desired for conventional operations, plug-and-play sensor platforms that can be tailored to requirements would provide the greatest flexibility.

The exception to the earlier admonition against maintaining two militaries is Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC). AFSOC requires some degree of low-tech COIN-specific systems, not because they are more effective than high-tech platforms, but because AFSOC's mission encompasses training other nations in COIN operations. Other countries experiencing or preparing against indigenous insurgencies are unlikely to have the same requirements or resources as the U.S. and will purchase and operate equipment tailored to their specific needs and affordable within their respective budgets. AFSOC personnel must be conversant in how to maximally integrate these platforms in a COIN role in order to be effective, and they need a robust inventory of suitable systems and platforms to fulfill their role.

AFSOC has not been fully leveraged in the past and requires greater emphasis and resources. While the direct-action missions of Special Operations Forces (SOF) receive the most attention, the Foreign Internal Defense (FID) role is perhaps most critical in the COIN environment. In Chapter 1, the desirability of early recognition and intervention in COIN was presented, and FID is the catalyst in that process. Early and aggressive FID can be the difference between success and failure, as well as measured U.S. involvement versus large-scale, high-risk intervention. One recent RAND counterinsurgency studied determined that early intervention in a broad number of budding insurgencies, even at the significant level of an El Salvador model, would still be considerably more cost effective than a wait-and-see attitude which would lead to a focused, but dilatory, response.[9] RAND suggested expanding the only existing AFSOC FID squadron to a wing.[10] An alternative would be to create FID-centered squadrons within each geographic combatant command (excepting NORTHCOM) allowing them to gain a greater regional familiarity and greatly expanding the combatant commander's options to execute what are increasingly emphasized as Phase 0 (zero) operations.[11]

A Smart Approach Demands Smart Leaders

"The Nation that makes a great distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools."
-- Thucydides

The third recommendation is to better educate officers across the spectrum of conflict, to include COIN operations. Insofar as this paper is concerned, this recommendation originates from the opinion that the genesis of the current confusion represents a conceptual lack of understanding of the limits of air power. This is not just true of Air Force officers, but they maintain the greatest burden for mastering and explaining the capabilities and limitations of their service. Air power has been shown to provide great flexibility when used in innovative ways, and all campaigns representing the entire spectrum of conflict require innovation at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

With certain exceptions (e.g., Special Ops personnel), full-spectrum education is most relevant to the officer corps and, among them, those who will serve as planners and senior leaders. Unlike ground forces, which operate in close proximity to insurgents and the population, due to the centralized nature of flying operations most operators have little need to appreciate the context of the conflict they are in to be effective at a tactical level. Fighter pilots

are given targets to bomb and certain rules of engagement; airlift pilots are given a mission, a cargo load, and a destination and time to land at; and space officers are generally far removed from the battlefield applications of the systems they maintain.[12] Pilots are trained in tactical responses to threats, but whether an SA-7 MANPAD is fired as part of a conventional campaign or an insurgency is of little import to them. Ensuring that the planning process that establishes targets, prescribes weapons, and dictates rules of engagement has taken account of the nature of insurgency is generally sufficient. Unfortunately it is unrealistic to individually select every planner or senior leader for just-in-time extended education in the conflict de jure. To be most effective, individual leaders need years of study tempered by their own experience to grasp the fundamental elements of warfare. It is therefore necessary to ensure that all officers have a common foundational grasp of warfare that is far greater than they possess at present and that begins earlier in their careers.

Some would argue that officers only need a better understanding of COIN operations since they are already familiar with conventional operations, and others would argue that Air Force officers need only focus on the application of air power in war. A RAND study on increasing the Air Force's capabilities vis-à-vis COIN operations recommended that:

> Substantial counterinsurgency education should be a mandatory part of the curriculum in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, at the Air Force Academy, and in all phases of Air Force Professional Military Education from Squadron Officer School to the Air War College. Opportunities for more in-depth training and education will need to be developed, as will appropriate career paths for counterinsurgency specialists.[13]

This is both necessary and appropriate, but not wholly sufficient. In reality, one cannot build the requisite knowledge to effectively employ an arm of war, in a subset of war, without understanding war itself: "But in war more than any other subject we must begin by looking at the nature of the whole; for here more than elsewhere the part and the whole must always be thought of together."[14]

It is neither necessary nor advisable for all Air Force officers to have military history degrees, but those who plan and lead operations must have acquired a solid understanding of warfare by formal or informal means. Contrary to the claims of some, Clausewitz remains relevant for both conventional and counterinsurgent operations as do many of his erudite predecessors such as Sun Tzu and Thucydides. Few Air Force officers today have ever read the

complete grand triumvirate above, though some Field Grade Officers have sampled bits and pieces in Professional Military Education. Too many are inclined to 'cram' for warfare by skipping these essential building blocks and proceeding directly to contemporary doctrine and templates to fill out their military portfolios. The same is true for military history—would-be strategists are too quick to focus on the last campaign rather than invest the time and effort to gain the knowledge requisite to put it in a historical perspective. This leads to the mistaken conception that every campaign represents revolutionary changes and therefore nullifies all past military knowledge. Given that it is impossible to predetermine who will become future planners, much less strategic decision makers, the number of officers who are well versed in warfighting theory and history should be expanded at every opportunity.

Prescriptions for greater education need not be—and should not be—unwieldy or expensive. For example, the Air Force Academy should be more war centric in its outlook. Traditionally it has been technically biased with such a myriad of math, engineering, and science core requirements that all graduates, including those with liberal arts degrees, receive Bachelor of Science as opposed to Bachelor of Arts degrees. Some of these courses could be eliminated, at least for non-science majors, and replaced with required courses taken from the current Master's- level courses taught at war colleges.[15] Any officer that graduates from a military academy should reasonably be expected to be well versed in warfare, and not just air warfare. ROTC could encourage the same, though it has less flexibility given its dependence on the respective civilian university it is attached to. The Air Force should provide more incentive for warfare-centric Master's degrees; many, probably most, officers taking Master's courses at present are simply filling a requirement for promotion rather than taking advantage of an opportunity that would benefit themselves and the Air Force. The Air Force could sponsor a robust Military Arts MA through Air University or a civilian institution.[16] Such a program should not include staff-specific topics, which are often part of Professional Military Education courses, such as the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Executing (PPBE) system, but should split its focus between warfare in general and air power applications in war. Airmen who are well versed in Air Force institutional history and air power theories but lack the ability to integrate these concepts into warfare in general, or to match the level of conceptual warfare expertise of their sister service counterparts will not be optimally effective at employing or advocating air power.

A related and equally warrior-centric critical area for continued additional Air Force emphasis is Area Studies. As has been previously pointed out, warfare is always shaped by factors of culture, national history, religion, politics, personalities and a myriad of other factors that planners must take into account.[17] All services have come to better recognize and promote the importance of language and cultural fluency in COIN. Few airmen are likely to become true Area Studies experts with the credibility of academics, but an intense familiarity would at least empower them to know the right questions to ask, where to go for answers, and how to implement the answers in military operations. Cultural familiarity is often equally or more important than military expertise in COIN and would make Air Force officers better able to contribute to COIN operations in the air and on the ground regardless of their specialty.[18] Master's degrees sponsored by the Air Force should promote or require area studies as part of the curriculum just as Professional Military Education programs have begun to incorporate modest but insufficient language requirements. Intelligence officers, for example, should be required or encouraged to receive a degree in Area Studies. Likewise, pilots and navigators, who generally receive no professional advantage from pursuing a particular degree type, should also be subject to increased incentives for degrees which focus on warfighting and area studies.

Language and cultural fluency can be equally vital to conventional operations as the likelihood of unilateral operations in today's combat environment is increasingly rare. Cultural interoperability is even more paramount than systems interoperability in coalition operations. U.S. officers, especially at the senior level, generally expect other countries to adapt themselves to English and understand U.S. military culture, and coalition partners generally oblige very well. Unfortunately, the Air Force abrogates the advantages of being able to understand peer perspectives in their proper cultural context and is often surprised when counterparts react in ways that seem counterintuitive from an American perspective. The same tendency sometimes obtains when officers develop a one-dimensional cultural understanding through only military-to-military contact, as is often the case for exchange programs. Military culture in any country, including the U.S., is likely to be eccentric to overall culture and true area specialists must be able to appreciate the differences.

Similar methods to the means for emphasizing expertise in military arts could be reasonably applied to bolster cultural expertise and could be expanded to include accessions, promotion potential, and increasing available exchange positions. Significant and lasting

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changes are unlikely to occur so long as positions such as attaché or Office of Defense Cooperation billets are seen as debilitating to a career. In his organizational study of the U.S. Army, Morris Janowitz posited, "It has been those men whose unconventional careers have involved them in politico-military assignments who display the most sustained political consciousness."[19] Politico-military positions generally build language capability, interagency cooperation, high-level interaction with partner military leaders, a service- or military-wide understanding of capabilities, and cross-cultural negotiating skills—all are indispensable to today's General Officer corps—but most who are put in such billets fail to keep up with the promotions of peers doing traditional wing or staff level assignments, and virtually none become generals. As an unfortunate corollary, too often the officers who choose or are selected for these billets do not represent the best the service has to offer. The conclusion to be drawn is that: "Higher rank means larger organizational experience, greater commitment to the organization, and more selecting out of deviant perspectives."[20] Stated more bluntly, "As one retired U.S. two-star recently put it: Those who are promoted are the 'can-do, go to people….Their skill is making the trains run on time. So, why are we surprised that, when the enemy becomes adaptive, we get caught off guard? If you raise a group of plumbers, you shouldn't be upset if they can't do theoretical physics."[21] As long as officers continue to be promoted based on tactical achievements, management ability, and the filling of all the right blocks at the right time, senior leaders will have to learn strategy, operational art, and the complexities of interagency and international cooperation via on the job training.

The Return of the Brain as a Weapon System

> *"Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men.*
> *It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory."*
> *-- General George S. Patton*

The final and most important recommendation is for military and civilian national security policymakers to return to beginning with strategy and operational art to address military quandaries. This recommendation is neither meant to be cynical nor condescending. It reflects the sense of an overreliance on technology and resource abundance to solve problems that almost always can be solved more effectively and efficiently through more appropriate and subtle means. As a British official serving in South-East Asia prophetically observed during the early days of U.S. operations in Vietnam, "I fear that in this as in other respects the Americans are too

apt to think that quantity is a substitute for quality and method."[22] At first blush this may seem to contradict previous arguments concerning the efficacy of high-tech weapons in COIN, but the contradiction is only illusory. U.S. technology is an asymmetric advantage that should be readily wielded in appropriate ways, but technology cannot continue to be viewed as the panacea for strategic difficulties, and its asymmetric value will quickly be drained by its overextension.

In a sense, technology has too often become the morphine that covers the strategic pain designed to alert the body military that things are wrong and getting worse. A contemporary example is the reaction to the use of IEDs in Iraq. The military reaction was to invest billions of dollars to wring technological solutions—jammers, detectors, robots, UAVs, up-armored HMMWVS followed by MRAPs, using airlift to reduce convoy requirements—with the laudable intent to counter the leading cause of U.S. casualties.[23] Technology, though, is often easy for an enemy to overcome with a change in tactics or weapons, and it only strikes at the symptoms without exposing the root cause. It has been somewhat effective in reducing IED casualties, at tremendous financial cost, but even more effective have been strategic changes (resulting from careful reflection or pure serendipity, as some would argue), long in coming, that have reduced the number of insurgents and increased the number of informants thereby decreasing IED attacks and American deaths.[24] This is not to suggest that the technology investments should not be pursued, only that an equal or greater vigor and sense of urgency ought to attend non-technology solutions.

In order to reinvigorate the ability to operate on a high strategic and operational plane, there must be a return to the notion, both preached and practiced, of warfare as an art. The first step of this is embodied in recommendation three above—preparing the officer corps early to deal with issues currently above their pay grade. A further leap forward requires decision makers at all levels to avoid the pitfalls of simple and false analogies in order to see war as both a continuum and for the unique event that it represents each time it occurs. Analogies are often spoken but more often implied, sometimes unconsciously—comparisons between Vietnam and Iraq or Afghanistan are often made and sometimes implied by the use of words such as 'slog' and 'quagmire'. More subtle, and arguably more dangerous, are the implications that a particular successful strategy in one conflict can be readily replicated in another—theories of oil spots and surges, and even the notion of 'winning hearts and minds' are all common clichés that should be considered illustrative but not definitive. As Greenhill and Staniland caution, "privileging

particular ideal-type strategies runs the risk of creating false dichotomies between approaches, whereas successful COIN requires mixtures of these approaches, not an embrace of any single one."[25] Illuminating theories such as Boyd's OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) Loop and Warden's Five Rings are too often 'cut and pasted' into the latest conflict in an attempt to adhere to the prevailing requirements of 'military science'; they ought to be considered as useful elements of military art to be plagiarized in whole or in part for any conflict to which they are suited, but never, ever to be seen as universally applicable.

In the uniformed military, nowhere is the potential for mental shortcuts more tempting than in the (mis)use of doctrine. Military doctrine is best viewed as a framework from which to begin and not as a straightjacket for planning. Not only can rigid application of doctrine have the ill effect of rendering U.S. actions easily predictable, but far more serious consequences can present themselves when a round doctrinal peg is forced into a square conflict context— something is likely to break with dramatic effect. Ironically, one of the first indicators that doctrine may be debilitating is when military practitioners defend poor performance on a lack of, or outdated, doctrine—this has occurred frequently after September 11th. The leading example is the publication of Army FM 3-24, which was widely anticipated and heralded to the extent of being published by the University of Chicago Press and reviewed by the New York Times. The greatest mitigating advantage of FM 3-24 is perhaps that it was specifically written with the current counterinsurgencies in mind, so its applicability is much more contextually relevant to contemporary conflicts than most doctrine documents.

The potential constructive uses of doctrine are undeniable when it is viewed as a historical compendium affording insight into valuable lessons drawn from the past.[26] Unfortunately, too often now it is approached as if it were a road map that must be followed to successfully arrive at the desired location in order to spare the user from having to go through the difficulties of having to map the unknown terrain himself. It serves as a proxy to the serious career-long study of operational art for the intellectually indolent warfighter. Traditionally, the British took a divergent perspective; as General Sir Frank Kitson described it, "Doctrine is prepared in order that the Army should have some basis for training and equipping itself. You certainly don't fight based on your doctrine. If you actually do fight based on your doctrine you're letting yourself in for disaster."[27]

In contrast to the analogy of a map, based on the slow-moving forces of geology and environment, the social sciences—sociology, political science, anthropology, economics, psychology and the like—are not subject to the relative contiguity and predictability of physical terrain. Each new conflict touched by the social sciences—namely all of them—must be mapped anew or one must risk taking the charted road to oblivion. Kemball, another British officer, encapsulates the basics of this concern in his argument against the use of doctrine—significantly, against air power doctrine in particular:

> My belief is that doctrine mainly serves to constrain the imaginative use of the flexibility of air power. In every situation there are different circumstances and parameters. On one hand you have the aircraft that you bought and the air power characteristics that it possesses. On the other, you have a military situation in which you wish to use the aircraft which reflects both geography and politics. How you use a weapon system should be a result of analysis of the situation that prevails at the time, and should not be dependent on a general doctrine that was developed without relation to specific situations.[28]

The Navy, probably only coincidentally, seems to have shared Kemball's doctrinal allergy in historical practice if not in theory, though it seems to have come on board since 1994 and has begun publishing a wider variety of service-level doctrine publications.[29] The most telling caution about applying doctrine off the shelf in a sterile manner is that doctrine is frequently rewritten only after it has proven inadequate—such is the case with Army FM 3-24 as well.

Conclusion

"Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events."
-- Winston Churchill

In the final analysis, neither insurgency nor conventional war is likely to pose an existential threat to the United States for the foreseeable future—both will continue to be wars of choice based on national priorities and interests. The type of warfare the U.S. conducts will therefore be based on the perceptions of decision makers regarding what threats should be confronted and how. Overly preparing for either level of warfare at the expense of the other will

at least partially become a self-fulfilling prophecy much as the neglect of COIN after the conclusion of Vietnam led to conventional conflicts with only limited and small scale involvement in irregular wars—likely a fortuitous occurrence given that the U.S. is currently relearning that extended involvement presumes considerable expense and risks. The most common argument for a major restructuring around COIN capabilities is that the nexus of failed and failing states, terrorist organizations that take refuge in anarchy, and the eventuality that terrorists will acquire and utilize weapons of mass destruction no longer permits the U.S. to ignore intrastate conflict. This paper has attempted to show, however, that success in such operations rests on many factors beyond the control of the U.S. military and often well beyond the control of the U.S. The concept of success itself is also likely to be more ambiguous and require extraordinary effort and resources for a considerable period of time, as Iraq and Afghanistan forewarn. Such endeavors will greatly reduce military readiness and leave other U.S. interests vulnerable for extended periods of time.

Though increasing the competence and capability of U.S. COIN capabilities is long overdue, nation building and massive scale military incursions generally can and should be avoided. Given that conventional-type military employment will likely continue to be a U.S. strength and an enemy vulnerability while irregular warfare will, by its nature, continue to play to the strengths of terrorists and other enemies, the U.S. should asymmetrically employ conventional capabilities when possible and appropriate. Proper and early application of COIN principles will also lead to a reduction in military manpower and time required to accomplish reasonable objectives, which should increasingly rely on other non-military instruments of national power.

An examination of the nature and future threat of insurgent warfare juxtaposed against the capabilities of military air power suggests that the Air Force should continue to pursue conventional primacy against the most critical conceived threats. Air Force weapons designed for high-end conventional conflicts have performed well when used innovatively in support of COIN operations. Efforts to meld COIN requirements into conventional systems during and after development are laudable so long as they do not permanently mitigate conventional capabilities or lead decision makers to falsely conclude that new technologies will lead to military victory in COIN operations. As a matter of overall defense policy, the destructive capabilities of conventional systems are more than adequate for contemporary COIN efforts;

COIN-specific capabilities are best focused on constructive elements which are at once under-resourced and of greatest moment. The Air Force, in coordination with other services, should investigate a potential leading role in information operations relevant to both COIN and conventional warfare. In general, COIN-specific weapon systems are not necessary except in the realm of AFSOC requirements to train and equip indigenous forces in counterinsurgency. AFSOC FID capabilities should be expanded, and the Air Force must be more aggressive and capable in its ability to surge FID for large-scale counterinsurgency operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Innovative and inexpensive solutions to make Air Force officers more competent in warfare across the spectrum, including Area Studies competencies, must be pursued more vigorously. This recommendation is the fulcrum for the innovative, effective, and efficient use of air power and existing and future specific weapons in COIN (and all other operations as well), and for ensuring that technology and resources are not substituted for proper strategy or the adroit application of operational art in future conflicts.

The future of counterinsurgency probably lies somewhere between the post-Vietnam mantra of 'never again' and the Iraq-scale nation building experiment. It may have to be confronted, but it should generally not be sought. Ultimate victory in anything but a purely domestic counterinsurgency is not completely within the realm of U.S. power, much less U.S. military power. COIN difficulties will always be more proportional to the extent to which causes are popular and regimes are not than to U.S. support of either side. Great discretion must be exercised in deciding when to commit military support to COIN operations, and more thorough planning must attend all operations where insurgent warfare could be empowered.[30] Air power will remain a relevant partner capability for COIN and will continue to help deter or win conventional conflicts. Airmen who are trained to understand and dissect complex problems of warfare and authoritatively offer innovative solutions (and not just air-centric ones) without either forgetting or marginalizing their own limits must lead the way or get pushed out of the way. Warfare has always favored the prescient and agile-minded over the strong, and the future of air power lies in the ability of airmen to focus on the former without sacrificing the latter.

[1] Clausewitz, 88.

[2] Nagl, 138.

[3] Terriff et al, 8.

[4] At various times overzealous airmen have been guilty of broad assertions of the eroding relevance of ground forces vis-à-vis air power, especially following Operations Desert Storm and Allied Force. This attitude is probably partially to blame for current reactions against the Air Force in counterinsurgency operations.

[5] Regarding the effectiveness of cheaper weapon systems, the conclusion of Owen and Mueller is applicable to non-airlift platforms as well: "Other conflicts, including the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the ongoing U.S. operations in that country and in Iraq, have borne out the lesson that a transport aircraft cannot be too modern or too capable for counterinsurgency warfare," Owen and Mueller, 54-55.

[6] "*Precautionary counterinsurgency* is based on the idea that it is best to stop the growth of insurgencies early, before they develop into powerful armed movements capable of posing severe threats to local governments. Precautionary counterinsurgency interventions will thus tend to be relatively small overall and will tend to involve very limited military components." Alan J. Vick, Adam Grissom, William Rosenau, Beth Grill, and Karl P. Mueller, *Air Power in the New Counterinsurgency Era* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006): 70.

[7] Nagl, 218.

[8] See, for example, Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. to Raise 'Irregular War' Capabilities," *Washington Post* (4 Dec 2008): 4.

[9] See Vick et al, 91-92.

[10] Ibid, 136-143.

[11] The main advantage of a wing structure is the ability to reduce administrative requirements that currently fall on the squadron.

[12] From Owen and Mueller: "A C-17 crew delivering a load into an austere airfield in a serious threat environment will employ essentially the same tactics whether they are transporting a tank in a conventional interstate conflict or armored patrol vehicles in a counterinsurgency. Likewise, the tactical issues and solutions involved in airdropping supplies to a covert team observing an Iranian nuclear site or watching a road junction in Afghanistan will be similar, at least for airlifters, if not for their 'customers.'" Owen and Mueller, 27.

[13] Ibid, 135-136.

[14] Clausewitz, 75.

[15] The Air Force Academy does have mandatory military education classes, but they operate on administrative, leadership, or basic air power history levels as opposed to the more intensive and strategic approach advocated here.

[16] Such a program might be designed similarly to AU's current program offering an MA through Air Command and Staff College by correspondence, which is unfortunately restricted to Major-selects and above.

[17] Greenhill and Staniland, for example, write, "Likewise, we also find that incomplete or biased—whether political, military, physical, cultural and/or psychological—analyses of insurgency can themselves be direct causes of counterinsurgency failure." Kelly M. Greenhill and Paul Staniland, "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency," *Civil Wars* Vol 9, No. 4 (Dec 2007): 415.

[18] "Bluntly stated, most conventional armed forces lack the language skills and cultural awareness—so-called 'social intelligence'—necessary to develop the human sources required to penetrate and understand insurgent movements." Vicks et al, 34.

[19] As cited in Nagl, 197.

[20] Nagl, 202.

[21] Greenhill and Staniland, 408.

[22] The official is Gordon Etherington-Smith, the UK Commissioner-General for South-East Asia as cited in Nagl, 130.

[23] The mixed results of the huge investment to combat IEDs has not been without controversy, and recently the House Armed Services Committee criticized the Joint IED Defeat Organization over its "inability to clearly articulate what it has accomplished with its relatively large budget." Cited in J. Scott Orr, "The Hidden Killer of U.S. Troops," *Parade* (Mar 22, 2009): 14.

[24] Such strategy shifts include the surge of forces, the reconciliation of the Sons of Iraq resulting in the 'Anbar Awakening,' and the application of the 'oil spot' technique to secure insurgent strongholds instead of reactive intervention.

[25] Greenhill and Staniland, 404.

[26] It is ironic, but intellectually consistent, that many who shout loudest for doctrine also discount Clausewitz as being inapplicable and out of date. As evidenced by how often he is quoted, doctrine writers tend to draw timeless lessons from Clausewitz and, in any case, doctrine can represent nothing more than historical recollection from the time of its publication—its practitioner should bear that in mind when applying it in modern cases.

[27] Nagl, 204.

[28] Cited in Corum and Johnson, 218.

[29] For a discussion on the evolution of naval doctrine, see James John Tritten, *Naval Doctrine ... From the Sea* (Norfolk, VA: Naval Doctrine Command, 1994). Doctrine is also a recent phenomenon in the British military, though traditionally British military officers have written prodigiously about their experiences in COIN campaigns and these works have often been used by their successors.

[30] One suggestion for further investigation is to introduce a new phase into standard conventional campaign planning. The new phase would be between the end of major combat operations (generally phase 3) and stability operations (generally phase 4) and would be designed to prepare for successful stability operations. The new phase could take advantage of the chaos and uncertainty of potential insurgents and civilians following combat operations and, as required for conditions and culture, be characterized by martial law, collecting census data and registering residents, securing borders, collecting arms, and the like. During planning and execution of other phases a general officer-level champion should be designated to carefully consider and advise the Joint Force Commander of any phase 3 operations that might negatively affect the 'transition from combat to stability' phase.

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