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NATO and 21st Century War

Samuel GRIER

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**NATO AND
21st CENTURY WAR**

by

Samuel Grier

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This piece is the culmination of my stay at the College and my work within NATO. It is intended specifically to stimulate debate about conflict and terrorism, about how the information age will have major influence on the international community and the Alliance, and finally to suggest their implications for post-9/11 security.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Research Division, particularly its acting director Cees Coops, for their support. I would also like to thank U.S. Marine Colonel Nick Marano of Senior Course 110; Dr David Yost, Professor of International Relations at the Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey; Dr Carlo Masala, Professor for International Relations at the University of the Armed Forces, Munich; Mr Stanley Sloan, Director, Atlantic Community Initiative; and U.S. Air Force Colonel (ret) AJ Briding for their comments. Finally, I would like to thank Laurence Ammour for her editorial work on both this piece and my previous occasional paper on the phenomenon of suicide bombing.

Let me end by expressing my very best wishes to my colleagues and friends who have made working in Rome so enjoyable.

Ciao amici, and arrivederci.

Dr Samuel Grier
Rome, 3 October 2007

INTRODUCTION

There is an expectation that the West,¹ and the United States in particular, faces catastrophe in Iraq and Afghanistan. Confronted with significant casualties arising from the employment of asymmetric warfare by determined adversaries, the United States and its NATO and Coalition partners have found decisive solutions to both conflicts elusive. Similarly, the challenges confronting Iraqis are daunting, and according to the recently released declassified Key Findings of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate, dependence on Coalition forces as an essential stabilizing element in Iraq will continue.²

But there is also evidence that the insurgency in Iraq is splintering and the situation in Afghanistan is improving. The virulent manifestation of political Islam found in both Iraq and Afghanistan has failed to convince their populations to abandon the democratic political process and the hope for a better life in favour of a new brand of puritanical and legalistic fundamentalism offered by a resurgent al Qaeda and its allies.³

A revolt against al Qaeda's presence in Sunni provinces is spreading to Shia communities in the South and now affects 40% of the country. Atrocities by al Qaeda against uncooperative tribal elites ignited the uprising, and the widespread belief that Iran is funding al Qaeda has contributed to its intensity. Security in many areas has dramatically improved, and overall attacks are far below historical trends.⁴

In places like Ramadi, long a hotbed of unrest and formerly part of the notorious "Sunni Triangle", the number of exploded car bombs, exploded roadside bombs, rockets fired, grenades fired, and shots fired since June are all the same: zero.⁵

¹ "The West" is loosely defined here as the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) and their closest democratic partners.

² *National Intelligence Estimate*, "Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead", January 2007, sweetness-light.com.

³ Ed Blanche, "Splintering Iraq's Insurgency", *Current Affairs: The Middle East*, June 2007, pp 26-28.

⁴ David Kilcullen, "Anatomy of a Tribal Revolt", *Small Wars Journal*, 29 August 2007.

⁵ Ullrich Fichtner, "Hope and Despair in Divided Iraq", *Spiegel Online*, Spiegel.de, 10 August 2007.

France's new readiness to play a role in Iraq in the fight against violence and in the work of the United Nations to restore democracy is not only symbolic, but a historic opportunity to promote French-Iraqi relations.⁶

Rather than dreading the “catastrophe” that looms in its future, the West should instead be embracing confrontation, standing firm in belief in its values and the legitimacy of its actions, and looking to shape the international security environment in this new era that will ultimately define Post-9/11 security.

21st century war is not only defining how we fight. The confluence of conflict and the information age has unleashed a geo-theological explosion of communication between two civilizations. While before the populations viewed each other with suspicion, the current outlook could be characterised as one of distrust and even rage. Paradoxical perhaps to the “untrained eye”, this is a welcome improvement.

Even if the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq take an unfavourable turn, they will have forever altered the sphere which we inhabit. Islamic societies that have been closed for centuries are exercising freedom of conscience and unleashing pent up furies. The West, meanwhile, is deciding once again whether the values it purports to believe in are worth fighting for.

We live in a world suddenly bursting with passion — passion for the right to shout our beliefs to a listening audience. A passionate planet will inevitably be cacophonous, strident and abrasive. The West must consider how it will cope with what will be a world radically different from what we have known in the past.

There is a dark side to 21st century conflict: genocide and gross human rights violations by groups that believe their desired end state justifies the use of any means to achieve it. For its part, the information revolution acts as a beacon that brings to light such abuses and creates an environment where dialogue can thrive.

This paper consists of three sections. **The Dark Side of 21st Century Conflict** begins by illustrating the violent nature of future conflict. The character of the Iraq intervention and the events leading up to it are then reviewed, and how tribulation dominates 21st century conflict and the realities associated with it are presented. The section ends

⁶ *BBC News*, “France ‘ready’ for role in Iraq”, news.bbc.co.uk, 20 August 2007.

with an analysis of the different perceptions of terrorism among member states of the Alliance.

How **Enlightenment Challenges the Dark Side** identifies the radical changes that inspired the information age, the media's impact on security policy, and how the West must change its communications strategy if it is to compete in the "War of Ideas". The section concludes with examples of strategic thinking as it applies to 21st century communications.

Finally, in the context of **Post-9/11 Security**, the idea of links between states versus relationships among Allies and how this difference will affect the geo-strategic security environment is developed. The paper ends with an analysis of what war will be like in the Post-9/11 era, emphasizing the interaction between conflict and communication.

CHAPTER 1 THE DARK SIDE OF 21st CENTURY CONFLICT

1.1 Genocide and Humanity's Failure to Act

Much like the revelation of genocide closed out the era of worldwide state-on-state conflict after World War II, the revelation of another genocide would be the harbinger of 21st century conflict.

The Holocaust was a systematic and coordinated strategy executed by the state against a target population and tacitly supported by the people. The genocides in Africa were eruptions of bloodshed endorsed by the state and aimed at a particular tribal community — ethereal attacks whose perpetrator was not the state but “the people”, hidden during the day and unleashed mostly at night with primitive instruments of war.

The impact of the Holocaust in Europe on its victims, captured powerfully by Elie Wiesel in his disturbing account *Night*, shares unsettling parallels with the recent genocides in Africa.

1.1.1 *The Devil Strikes*

It was a television documentary on Rwanda's genocide. In one of its most dramatic scenes, a group of what looks to be men, women and children are sitting in the middle of a road, half surrounded by what appears to be an indifferent mob.

Suddenly emerging from the mob is a man with a machete, who rapidly approaches the seated group.

He is the first oppressor, the first face of hell and death.⁷

The man begins swinging his weapon, hacking first at one person, then at the next. There is no escape for those sitting. Nowhere to

⁷ Elie Wiesel, *Night* (Hill and Wang, 2006), paraphrase from the new translation, p 19.

run. They sit immobile, without resisting, awaiting death, resigned to their fate.

It could be the antechamber of hell. A crazed man, inconceivable brutality.⁸

The mob seems to pay little attention, when without warning a second man comes out of the crowd. Also armed with a machete, he joins the attack.

After that moment on, everything happened very quickly. The race toward death had begun.⁹

One by one, the people sitting in the road fall over, as they are hacked to pieces. The mob shuffles toward the group, and the attack gains momentum. Mercifully, the camera records no sound, the scene too distant to see the stricken faces or the gruesome effects of the carnage. Bodies continue to fall, until no one is left.

Romeo Dallaire's book, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, provides an account of the genocide in Rwanda, where the general's own government (Canada) had all but abandoned him and where the United Nations had demanded from him the impossible.

Dallaire had fallen into a trap, up to his neck. It was as if he was locked in a room, the doors nailed, the way back irrevocably cut off.¹⁰

Dallaire's book offers a poignant portrayal of his emotional deterioration, triggered by his complete sense of powerlessness to prevent the deadly slaughter that would take place over the course of 100 days.¹¹

A slaughter that for a time would deprive him of his desire to live, a slaughter that had murdered his soul and turned his dreams to ashes.¹²

Since finally recording his experience, Dallaire has championed the need for nations to confront the new realities faced by responsible democratic governments at the threshold of the 21st century — a century

⁸ Ibid, paraphrase from p 34.

⁹ Ibid, quote from p 10.

¹⁰ Ibid, paraphrase from p 24.

¹¹ Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Random House Canada, 2003).

¹² Wiesel, paraphrase from p 34.

marked by not only a changing security environment whose transformation may already have exceeded our capacity to adapt, but one where “radical novelties”,¹³ such as 21st century war, threaten the well-being of nations and the continued existence of international organisations.

1.2 A Fateful Decision — War in Iraq¹⁴

Iraq would ignite the geo-theological explosion.

“This will be a campaign unlike any other in history. It will be characterized by shock, by surprise, by flexibility, by the employment of precise munitions on a scale never before seen, and by the application of overwhelming force. The outcome is in no doubt.” (General Tommy Franks, Commander, Coalition forces Iraq, 22 March 2003)

Many of the details of the Iraq campaign are forgotten. As the character of 21st century conflict was formed in the details of that campaign, and since the pattern of disagreement and cooperation among the NATO Allies may be repeated, a review of events is vital.

1.2.1 Preparations

Before the war with Iraq began, the United States dropped leaflets written in Arabic: “We can see everything. Do not use nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. The Coalition has superior satellite technology, which allows Coalition forces to see the preparation and transportation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. Unit

¹³ E.W. Dijkstra, “On the Cruelty of Really Teaching Computer Science,” *Dijkstra paper no. 1036*, utexas.edu, 1989. Dijkstra first used the term “radical novelties” in this controversial piece where he suggested that gradual change was the dominant paradigm of history and made most people, scholars included, incapable of coping with sharp discontinuities that require new thinking. It was later published in *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)*, Vol 32, No 12, Dec 1989, pp 1398-1404. The genesis of this piece was his claim that computers were a historic development on the order of the birth control pill and nuclear weapons. Dijkstra was a visionary who postulated problems and expounded perspectives that others in computer science had not foreseen or considered.

¹⁴ The author wrote most of this segment during and immediately after the combat operations in March-April 2003, based on data from open sources. Books written later may contain updated information derived from a more complete analysis.

commanders will be held accountable for non-compliance.” Other leaflets telling Iraqi soldiers how to surrender were also dropped.

The Coalition forces were an initial group of thirty-five nations that joined with the United States to remove Saddam Hussein and his sons from power, and in the process strip Iraq of its suspected weapons of mass destruction.

Representatives of the Iraqi opposition met in Salah al Din, northern Iraq, with the intention of discussing preparations for a post-conflict Iraq. Attended by President Bush’s special advisor, Zalmay Khalilzad, the meeting did much to build bridges between Washington and the opposition leaders.¹⁵

Nine hours before the scheduled start of the campaign, U.S. and allied special operations forces, supported by aircraft flying precision strike missions, flooded Western Iraq and fought a series of fierce battles to prevent SCUD missile attacks on Israel by Iraqi forces. Iraqi plans to set fire to oil wells and launch strikes against Jordan were also thwarted.¹⁶ Fewer than 25 Patriot missiles would be fired in defence against SCUDs during the war, just 10% of the total number that had been expected.

1.2.2 The Start of Conflict

Surprise — based on “actionable intelligence” — has the potential to change the course of conflict.

The U.S. planned to begin the war with an aerial campaign based on the premise of shock and awe, but the plan changed suddenly to take advantage of a report that Saddam’s whereabouts were known.

It was still early morning in the Persian Gulf, the sky dark, the deck of the large ship empty. Suddenly, a missile leapt from the vessel’s interior out over the water, and its insides caught fire when the missile reached a safe distance. It hung awkwardly in midair for just a moment, dropped its nose horizontally to the earth’s surface, and then began the journey to its distant target. This scene repeated itself on a number of ships, forty-two times in all. It would be the war’s opening salvo.

¹⁵ Representatives included the Kurdish Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Iraqi National Congress, the Iraqi National Accord, and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Reported by Darren Lake from London in *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, “How different it all is from the last Gulf War”, 26 March 2003.

¹⁶ Vago Muradian, “Allied Special Forces Took Western Iraq”, *Defense News*, 19 May 2003.

Inside a large facility at a location known as Dora Farms, Saddam Hussein and his two sons were rumoured to be meeting to plan strategy with the most trusted of his cadre of military officers. It was dawn, and daylight peeked over the vast horizon. In 1991 during the Gulf War, the Americans had not attacked during the day. They attacked only at night, since they possessed night vision devices and the global positioning system to guide them — so this group considered it safe to gather in the growing light, just as it had done many years before.

Bold assumptions and legacy thinking can be fatal.

Among those serving in the group was a traitor, an informer, who told the Americans that Saddam was present. Suddenly and unexpectedly, two F-117 stealth fighters — launched and sent to Baghdad without escort to preserve the element of surprise — dropped precision-guided bombs aimed at the Iraqi leadership. They smashed into the facility at Dora Farms, collapsing its structure. Moments later, forty-two cruise missiles struck the same facility, one after the other, to finish the job.

The time in Iraq was 7:40 AM. Saddam and his sons, along with the Iraqi military leadership, were either killed, wounded, or newly aware that the prosecution of this war would be dramatically different from their previous experience. Rescuers vainly dug through the ruins, searching for the man who had reigned over Iraq for the past quarter century.

On the ground a Special Forces information warfare element disabled Iraqi state radio on the heels of that first strike. High above Baghdad a U.S. C-130, housing electronic suites in its fuselage from front to back, began transmitting in Arabic on the frequency used by Iraqi state radio, “This is the day we’ve been waiting for.”

Shock and awe are still a central part of 21st century war.

When the real bombing began, twenty-five buildings disappeared in a matter of minutes. Over 300 cruise missiles were launched off ships in a single day, and another 300 followed over the course of the next six days. Fourteen B-52’s, each carrying enough ordnance to strike nearly twenty targets, prepared to send shockwaves across Baghdad. Navy carriers, capable of striking ten times as many targets in a single day as during the 1991 Gulf War, launched wave after wave of aircraft.

Terrified of reprisal from Coalition aircraft, Iraqi soldiers in the south of the country launched their SCUD missiles toward Kuwait from mobile launchers, without using radar to aim them. The missiles landed harmlessly in the desert sand and in the gulf waters. Two missiles, which appeared as if they might strike something useful, were intercepted by U.S. Patriot missiles. Iraqi soldiers, meanwhile, ran to escape the retaliation of the “SCUD busters”. None of the SCUD missiles launched by the Iraqis caused damage to the U.S. or its Coalition partners.

Nearly 300,000 U.S. and Coalition soldiers were deployed in and around Iraq to topple Saddam’s regime. Fewer than a hundred U.S. troops were killed in action. Another fifty died in accidents and from other causes. The Iraqis, meanwhile, surrendered and died by the thousands.

1.2.3 Pre-emptive Self Defence

“The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction — and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.” (2002 National Security Strategy of the United States of America).

“Does he or doesn’t he possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD)?”

That was the debate that raged over Iraq’s cruel and unyielding President Saddam Hussein, himself a PMD¹⁷ to any Iraqi who might openly oppose him. The UN Security Council had reinstated weapons inspections months earlier at the insistence of the United States, all the while the U.S. relentlessly building its military presence in the region. The U.S. stated its intention to force a regime change unless Iraq fully cooperated with United Nations inspectors and demonstrated that it had eliminated its WMD. However, the majority of the United Nations Security Council, to include three of its permanent members, opposed the U.S. position.

The continued U.S. military build-up in the Gulf region had a two-fold purpose. First, to pressure Saddam to cooperate with inspectors and reveal his suspected weapons of mass destruction. Second, to show

¹⁷ Person of Mass Destruction.

the Iraqi regime that unless it cooperated fully, the U.S. had the will and capability to act quickly when the appropriate time arrived.

Also lurking in the background of the developing situation were several less obvious, but perhaps no less important issues. First, the U.S. had been flying missions in the no-fly zones over Iraq for more than ten years. Similarly, troops placed in Saudi Arabia prior to the 1991 Gulf War were still there, and Saudi resentment toward their presence was growing. Both operations would be needed as long as Saddam or his sons remained in power. Second, even if Saddam gave up his own WMD production programmes, there was no guarantee that he would not, or could not, purchase them from other sources and serve as a conduit for their proliferation. Consequently, even an Iraq cooperating with UN and International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors remained a threat. Finally, without Saddam and his heirs gone the U.S. believed that Iraq could never realize its full economic potential, because an Iraqi regime no longer under sanctions would have the ability to rebuild its armed forces and threaten peace in the Middle East region once again.

1.2.4 International Disagreement

Conflicting perceptions make disagreement, even among Allies, inevitable.

“All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.” (Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter)

The period leading up to the U.S. intervention was chaotic. It was extensively debated whether the Bush administration’s intent to take military action against Iraq contradicted the UN Charter. This debate stymied agreement in both the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the United Nations Security Council.

The NATO Allies could not agree on whether to plan for Turkey’s protection, should conflict with Iraq begin. France expressed concern that approval for planning would be equivalent to giving a green light to take military action. France had similarly delayed planning for the

intervention in Bosnia ten years earlier, so this controversy was not without precedent — despite attempts by much of the U.S. media to paint it as “the end of NATO”, and notwithstanding the U.S. NATO Ambassador’s reference to the intense debate as a “near death experience”.

France’s President Jacques Chirac managed to obtain backing from Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg in the NAC to support its opposition, but the rest of the Alliance supported the U.S. proposal to begin planning. To break the impasse, the NATO Secretary General called for a meeting of its members that were part of the Defence Planning Committee, a forum in which France does not participate. There, the Alliance finally reached consensus in February 2003 to plan for the protection of Turkey.

But France’s reluctance to approve the use of force continued in the United Nations, and joining France’s president were Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schröder.

The U.S. delayed taking military action after its troops were in place, in deference to a request from the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister Tony Blair, who by this time was one of its few vocal supporters — and who wanted to give Saddam one last opportunity to disarm, while attempting to avoid criticism for rushing to war without exercising all available options. President Bush also seemed to hope that this time would give the U.S. an opportunity to convince a majority of the UN Security Council’s non-permanent members to support his demands. Although France, China and Russia could veto the U.S. request for another resolution to take action against Iraq, it was believed that support from a majority of the Council’s non-permanent members could lend greater legitimacy to U.S. actions.

But the time spent in further diplomatic deliberations actually did little to gain support and instead allowed the Iraqis to continue final preparations for battle. In the end the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain led an uncompromising call for action. President Bush finally gave a 48-hour ultimatum on 16 March 2003 to Saddam and his sons to leave Iraq or be removed forcefully. It was no surprise that when the 48 hours passed, Saddam was still defiantly in place.

Out of the ashes of the Security Council’s failure to reach agreement rose thirty-five nations that offered to join the U.S. effort. Dividing lines that had partitioned Europe in NATO were now drawn

across the face of the United Nations, and the United States stood amongst a minority coalition that would eventually grow to forty-two.

1.2.5 Stumbling Blocks

Successfully navigating the “known unknowns” will test the limits of even the best laid plans.

The first blow to U.S. planning came at the hands of Turkey’s Parliament, which voted to deny the United States use of its territory for operations. Troops and logisticians who were anticipating the opportunity to open a front in Northern Iraq would instead be directed to Kuwait or airlifted into Iraq, where they would join with other U.S. forces in the dash to get to Baghdad.

The second blow came when television news analysts, specifically retired four-star military officers of significant stature from the Clinton administration, criticized the plan to take Baghdad that had been developed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and General Tommy Franks, commander of the Coalition forces. The criticism centered on the size of the force prosecuting the war and the potential for casualties. General Richard Myers, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, reacted especially strongly to the criticism, insisting that the fighting was proceeding as planned, that criticism undermined the morale of the troops, and that reliable intelligence gave them confidence that the pace of the American advance was not proceeding too fast.

Perhaps partly because of the criticism, perhaps partly due to the plan’s flexibility, the Coalition’s race to Baghdad paused to strengthen its logistical lines and intensify its bombing campaign before sending ground troops forward. With complete freedom of action and total dominance of the battle space, the well-timed pause paved the way for a surprisingly easy entry into Baghdad.

1.2.6 The Hand of God

“Fog and friction” will be a factor in every conflict.

When sandstorms, perhaps the worst in a hundred years, swept in and brought the U.S. advance to a standstill, there was concern that the

weather was on the side of the enemy. One U.S. soldier suffocated in his foxhole. Those who opposed the conflict gloated at what was characterized as overconfidence by the technologically superior American forces.

But little reported by the media was the story that after the sandstorms, at least one column of soldiers preparing to cross the desert emerged from their foxholes to find a vast minefield uncovered by the fierce winds. It was an easy task to go around the deadly mines.¹⁸ Not a single soldier was lost to landmines during the initial intervention.

1.2.7 Iraqi Command and Control

You cannot control what you cannot command.

“We have placed them in a quagmire from which they can never emerge except dead.” (Mohamed Saeed al-Sahaf, Iraqi Minister of Information)

Saddam Hussein had perhaps expected when the 1991 Gulf War began that he would exercise command and control over Iraqi forces in the same way he did in the war against Iran. In the Iraq-Iran conflict, neither side had gained much ground. There were massive assaults followed by massive counter-assaults, accompanied by heavy casualties, and forces moved with little manoeuvre. Each side had time to plan its attack and regroup until the next provocation.

But the first action taken by U.S. forces in the 1991 Gulf War had been to decapitate Saddam’s command and control system. Iraq’s communications consisted primarily of cellular technology, a brilliant mechanism for networking an underdeveloped nation quickly, but a disaster for preventing an adversary from gathering intelligence and an easy target for destruction during conflict. With their communications silenced by U.S. strikes, Iraqi commanders fought blindly, never receiving orders to guide their actions. The result was a rout of Iraq’s army and the grounding of its air force.

This time, Saddam had prepared for the worst. He had his communications cables buried in the sand, and he gave his commanders orders in advance that would give an appearance of being under positive

¹⁸ Reported on KTLF radio, Colorado Springs, 17 April 2003.

control. He also purchased satellite-jamming devices, which were intended to thwart American precision-guided weapons. Saddam appeared to believe that he would at some point during the war give his commanders more direction.

Repeatedly, U.S. commanders stated that Iraqi forces seemed to be under someone's control, but in fact their actions were unimaginative and exercised within narrow and rigid constraints typical of a preplanned strategy. Iraqi commanders seemed to be exercising what little prerogative they had, with what little skill they possessed.

1.2.8 Fratricide and the Dark Side of Lethality

While the goal should be that not a single soldier is lost to friendly fire, it may be unrealistic in a conflict involving several hundred thousand allied combat troops.

As many as a dozen friendly fire incidents may have been responsible for up to seven deaths. There was much lamenting about the deaths due to fratricide, and some critics asserted that more needed to be done to prevent them. But the lethality of the weapons systems employed by the Coalition forces was a double-edged sword. When turned on the enemy, the lethality was horrendously effective and responsible for kill ratios of 100 to 1, and in some cases greater than 500 to 1. But when accidentally pointed at friendly forces, the damage caused by the misaimed weapons was equally devastating. Given this observation, the number of fatalities due to friendly fire was not excessive. Moreover, the only reason the ratio of friendly fire to total casualties was almost 10% was because the number of Coalition forces killed by enemy fire was so small.

Part of the fratricide involved aircraft. Coalition forces feared, particularly in the early days of the conflict, that a chemical weapon attack by Saddam loyalists with its potential for mass casualties was, if not imminent, then certainly highly probable. The rules of engagement employed by the Coalition forces, calling for Patriot missile batteries to engage and fire upon any plane whose Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) was either inoperative or didn't indicate that the plane was a "friendly", led to the shoot down of a British aircraft and two U.S. planes.

1.2.9 *The Efficacy of Professional Forces*

“Efficacy versus conscription” is an either-or proposition.

Prior to the invasion, a call came from some members of the U.S. Congress to reinstate a draft. The proposal wasn't necessarily made with concern for the capability of the U.S. armed forces, but rather was intended by political forces that opposed the war to encourage dialogue rather than military action. “I believe that if those calling for war knew that their children were likely to be required to serve — and to be placed in harm's way — there would be more caution and greater willingness to work with the international community in dealing with Iraq.”¹⁹ Four years later, the president's war czar would also suggest that a draft should be considered, citing overstretch as a rationale.²⁰

The all-volunteer professional military soldier is more thoroughly trained, better educated, and more highly motivated than his Vietnam era, non-volunteer counterpart. Leading today's forces is similar to leading a football team of eager recruits — all the “players” want to be present on the playing field, and all cooperate and train to be part of a capable and winning team. In contrast, the non-volunteer force in the United States was replete with disciplinary problems and personnel who had little or no desire to serve their country in the military, much less during time of conflict.

The leadership principles employed to lead these two very dissimilar militaries are also different. The current senior leadership of the U.S. military has “grown up” in the all-volunteer force, and asking it to convert reluctant draftees into rank and file soldiers has the potential to cause a leadership crisis.

But the real loser in this proposal would be the combat capability of the U.S. military. The friction that non-volunteers would introduce into the well-oiled military machine witnessed during this conflict, both during and after the initial intervention, could be catastrophic to the mission and morale of the force.

¹⁹ Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY), *NBC's Today Show*, 3 January 2003.

²⁰ *Associated Press*, “Iraq war czar: consider a draft”, *cnn.com*, 10 August 2007.

1.2.10 The Role of the Media

Embedded journalists will tell the stories of 21st century conflict.

For this conflict, the Bush administration embedded 500 reporters within deployed U.S. units. A number of prominent personalities, to include Ted Koppel and Ollie North, joined the effort. The rationale behind the strategy was that if reporters lived and shared the experience of being in combat with U.S. soldiers, they would grow to respect and better understand the men and women of the armed forces. The plan for the most part worked, bringing home to the nation the dedication of the professional military soldier and the stresses faced during combat. A secondary outcome was to mitigate the “CNN effect”, as reporters viewed and “told” all about the war firsthand.

1.2.11 Shock and Awe — the Twenty-One Day War

“You have protected our country from a gathering danger and liberated the Iraqi people.”(Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense to U.S. troops at Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar, 28 April 2003).

The conflict did not begin with the promised shock and awe offensive. Instead, President Bush authorized an attack on Saddam Hussein and his inner circle in an attempt to win the war with a pinprick and to avoid the destruction the projected campaign would cause. It proved unsuccessful, but may have launched Saddam on a run for his life and ended any threat of a coordinated response by Iraqi forces.

A side effect of delaying the promised aerial assault was that Iraqi state television remained on the air. The belief that the war would be short and the station useful for the communications needed after a successful campaign backfired. The regime used the station to assure its populace that Saddam was still alive and that the Iraqi army was in fact turning back the American offensive. Although inconsistent with reality and militarily insignificant, it hurt U.S. efforts in the battle to win the support of Iraqi public opinion until the station was taken off the air.

When the aerial campaign finally began, the speed with which the Iraqi regime collapsed caught even those with high expectations for a quick victory by surprise. What little remained of elite Iraqi units after the

Coalition bombing was no match for Coalition forces, and the survivors either surrendered, melted away, or were quickly decimated.

In a display that applied overwhelming force with unrelenting ferocity, using almost perfect situational awareness of events as they happened in the battle space and with minimal loss of life due to collateral damage (Iraqi civilians and friendly combatants), the U.S. campaign may have created unrealistic expectations, particularly on the part of its public, for how the post-conflict phase would unfold.

1.2.12 The Unwelcome Arrival of the “Unknown Unknowns”

The “unknown unknowns” exceed the limits of even the best laid plans. Responding to surprise is the ultimate test of any commander and his forces, and “muddling through” is not an option.

“Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know.” (Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense during a Department of Defense briefing, 12 February 2002)

The resulting optimism and accompanying complacency, caused by quick victory, turned out to be the worst outcome possible for what had been a totally successful military campaign. Moreover, the planning that took place to cope with the “known unknowns” did not foresee what might lie ahead subsequent to the intervention, particularly as the resistance to the American victory gained momentum.²¹ This lapse, and the resulting lack of ownership and failure to address the critical problems created by what Donald Rumsfeld, then U.S. Secretary of Defense, referred to as the “unknown unknowns”, would begin the unraveling of the occupation.

²¹ An interview conducted by Jim Lehrer with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on PBS just weeks prior to the intervention (“Prepared for War”, *Online NewsHour Special Report: Intervention in Iraq?*, pbs.org, 20 Feb 2003), indicates that the focus of planning was on what the unexpected might bring *during* the conflict, rather than in its aftermath. A similar observation was made by Bob Woodward in a later interview. See *State of Denial*, (Simon and Schuster, 2006) pp 178-179.

The most salient example would be the lawlessness and looting in the Iraqi capital.²² While in U.S. “eyes” the U.S. military was exercising restraint appropriate in a civil society, a very dangerous impression of powerlessness was being conveyed across Iraq. A second and much more politically troubling case was the failure to find weapons of mass destruction.²³ As the number of U.S. casualties began to rise, this would become increasingly controversial and challenge the legitimacy of the intervention. Ethnic tensions would offer a third example. Sunni elites, who did not fight for Saddam Hussein during the March-April 2003 operations, never viewed themselves as being defeated. Sectarian violence coincident with the sudden emergence of radical Mullahs as sources of political power and influence once Saddam was deposed, would fuel tensions and ultimately jeopardize the success of elections.

1.2.13 The Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction

“There is no doubt that Iraq has had weapons of mass destruction. I remain confident they will be found.” (Tony Blair, United Kingdom Prime Minister, 28 April 2003)

The war was justified primarily on the premise that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and might transfer them to terrorist organisations. Despite searching hundreds of suspected sites, no such weapons have ever been found. Was this due to a failure of intelligence, a failure in political judgment and the selective use of intelligence, or a worst case assessment of the situation? The failure to find WMD has led to accusations that doubt the integrity of both Mr Blair and Mr Bush, and for the Bush administration in particular it places into doubt the reliability of the decision-making process used to go to war.

This discrepancy raises a number of pertinent questions:

- How certain must intelligence be before it is actionable?
- Who makes the call on whether the intelligence justifies action — the intelligence experts or the politicians who have to live with the consequences of any decisions that are taken (or not taken)?

²² See Woodward, p 184.

²³ Ibid, pp 184-185.

- How should politicians address uncertainty, when they must rally public opinion over to their point of view if they believe that action is necessary?
- What role does uncertainty play with respect to political will when intelligence has proven to be “less than perfect”, or even worse, unreliable?

These questions have become much more momentous as the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan have deteriorated.

1.3 Conflict in the Midst of Tribulation

“There is many a boy here today who looks on war as all glory, but boys, it is all hell.” (U.S. Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, Address to the graduating class of the Michigan Military Academy, 19 June 1879)

The tribulation in Iraq would begin in the war’s aftermath as resistance to Coalition forces “dug in” and gained energy. Insurgents would bring an end to the concept of neutrality, refuse adherence to any established rules of war, violate all notions of human rights, and kill indiscriminately as long as it hurt the Coalition or any Iraqi — including children — who might offer assistance or benefit from the kindness of the “occupation forces”. Foreigners were kidnapped and killed if it suited the purpose of the assailants. The insurgents would eventually cause four million citizens to flee the country, displace internally two million citizens, and forcibly shut down all medical facilities. Children would be brazenly employed by militias as “lookouts” to report Coalition forces on the move, and places of worship would become storage locations for armaments. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including suicide bombers, became the weapons of choice. Sunni Muslims killed Shiites and Americans, and Shia Muslims killed Sunnis and Americans. Abu Zarqawi, a Jordanian thug turned al Qaeda terrorist, killed anyone. Sub-state actors created mayhem and fomented chaos, threatening the survival of the fledgling state.

Hell had come to Iraq.

1.3.1 *The Need for Security*

There can be no development without security.

The Riga Summit Declaration states that “there can be no security in Afghanistan without development, and no development without security”.²⁴ This formula has since been repeated often, and this double counterpoint implies that the two are inseparable. In laymen’s terms, this relationship is a Catch-22.²⁵ This “no-win situation” serves not only as the basis for NATO strategy in Afghanistan, but for U.S. strategy in Iraq, too. Ironically, it also serves as the basis for the success of the insurgencies there — which continually attack the infrastructure in-between killing sprees.

The failure to achieve progress in development saps political will and frustrates the local population. The aversion in Western societies to military and civilian casualties and their impact on Alliance solidarity, are also well understood by the enemy. It is no mistake that insurgents take aim at the West’s Centre of Gravity (CoG): political will and cohesion.²⁶ Undermine them, and it tips the balance in favour of the insurgency.

This Catch-22 should be reconsidered as the basis for strategy in both Afghanistan and Iraq, with the provision of security regarded as a pre-condition for development.²⁷ This is not a philosophical nuance or a rhetorical subtlety, but a necessity to establish clear priorities and a rationale for civil-military cooperation.

²⁴ Riga Summit Declaration, issued by Heads of State and Government, paragraph 6, 29 November 2006.

²⁵ You’ll recall from Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* that the “catch”, designed to prevent anyone from avoiding combat missions, specified that a concern for one’s safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. So a crazy pilot could be grounded if he asked. But as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. The result was that a pilot would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn’t, but if he was sane he had to fly them. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catch-22.

²⁶ Allied Command Transformation, “United States Joint Forces Command and United States Central Command Coalition Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Conference Final Report”, 10 Jul 2007, p 1-1.

²⁷ This same Catch-22 applies to drug interdiction in Afghanistan, where some believe that solving the drug problem by eradicating the poppies would hurt economic development. Poppy exportation must be immediately brought to an absolute halt, and poppy production eliminated as quickly as possible. Subsidised alternative crops for farmers should be vigorously pursued as a minimum; other innovative proposals have been made and should also be explored. The vast majority of cocaine sold in Europe is from Afghanistan, and the money earned is then used to buy weapons to kill NATO soldiers.

Occupying forces must establish a realistic framework for success in the wake of a conflict, and they must first and foremost emphasise security. Only with security can a comprehensive approach to nation building, which by its very nature requires civilian oversight and the participation of international and non-governmental organisations, be brought to bear in a potentially hostile environment. This in turn offers the local population hope for the future.

The employment of provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs, in Afghanistan has proven to be a realistic framework. The tactic being employed in Iraq for the surge against al Qaeda north of Baghdad is “clear, hold, and build”.²⁸ If implemented effectively, this could prove to be a realistic framework in support of the broader U.S. strategy to eliminate al Qaeda influence and its threat against the Iraqi population.

In summary, the functions the state is ultimately expected to perform should be defined; measures of performance to ensure progress should be developed; a realistic framework to ensure an appropriate level of security and achieve the desired end state must be agreed; and resources should be identified, committed and prioritised in support of the approved framework.

1.3.2 Wishful Thinking

Analyzing data and drawing lessons learned is crucial to avoid repeating mistakes. But “reasoning by analogy” is wishful thinking.

One of the most common critiques of the post-conflict phase is the argument that if the Iraqi military had been kept intact at the end of the Saddam Hussein regime, many of the problems faced by the Coalition forces today simply wouldn’t exist. The analogy that suggests that Iraqi soldiers would have behaved exactly like Robert E Lee’s troops after his surrender at Appomattox,²⁹ or that an army that was instrumental in suppressing the populace would suddenly “contribute greatly to propping up a fragile state” is wishful thinking.³⁰

If the U.S. had indeed “kept” an Iraqi Army of over 100,000 men led by Sunni officers and comprised predominantly of supporters of the

²⁸ *BBC News*, “US launches major Iraq offensive”, news.bbc.co.uk, 19 June 2007.

²⁹ See Woodward, p 189.

³⁰ William Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War”, *Antiwar.com*, 15 Jan 2007.

Baath Party, and they had eventually turned on the populace or U.S. forces, criticism would have taken exactly the opposite form.

1.3.3 An Absence of Logic?

Logic that fits with Western thinking may not be present in 21st century war.

The police and military, comprised of different ethnic populations, may not trust each other despite serving in similar capacities and ostensibly sharing a common goal of providing security to the state. Both may also be subject to coercion or temptation with respect to supporting local terrorists and accepting bribes. As a remedy for the potential for intimidation and corruption, some serving U.S. soldiers in Iraq have suggested combining equal numbers of police and army personnel in the same units, supported by a smaller number of forces from the Coalition. This fosters integration, encourages trust, and promotes the development of professionalism in both forces.

When locals are murdered by insurgents in Iraq, the Coalition should not expect greater support. Rather, the argument that “this would not have happened if the foreign troops were not here” may be the likely conclusion of the local population.

Complacent or irresponsible behaviour that leads to the death of an Iraqi soldier is not tied by his unit to a lack of discipline or carelessness, but rather to “God’s will”. Convinced that the Iraqi soldier would have died even if he had been acting responsibly, the Iraqi contingent draws no lessons from the experience and repeats its mistakes.

Fatalism also inhibits the local population from realising that they can shape the future. In a culture that does not view the universe in linear terms, event “B” may not be associated with event “A”. This implies that local forces may not understand, or even worse may not fully believe, that accomplishing event “A” will eventually lead to event “B”. Hence, embedding Coalition forces in the local police and armed forces during stabilisation and reconstruction operations is not only critical, but may be required much longer than originally anticipated.

This may also help explain the “democratic” outcomes observed in the region. The exercise of democracy is not viewed as an opportunity to shape the future according to the preference of voters, but rather to

select the people who will exercise power on their behalf. This nuance means that confidence is placed not in democracy as an ideal and as a system that guarantees a free society, but instead that democracy is viewed as a tool and confidence is consigned to people in power and their ability to further the interests of the groups that “elected” them. Conversely, this implies an obligation on the part of leaders to their constituencies and not to the state and its system of government.

Afghans and Iraqis have said they want effective government responsive to people’s needs and which provides security, honour, justice and prosperity.³¹ This kind of “democracy” is not unlike the current system already in place, where Muslims “choose” which Mullah they wish to follow.

Rather than evidence of an “absence of logic”, an expectation of and appreciation for nonlinear thinking are the requirements of 21st century warfare. (The corollary, of course, is that this nonlinearity can be exploited during combat.)

1.3.4 Random Acts of Violence

Learning to survive in a 21st century combat zone is a perishable skill.

Although this finding is counterintuitive, combat leaders arriving in Iraq and serving in the war zone for the first time are often more effective than those returning for a subsequent tour. The failure by those returning for multiple tours to appreciate or respect the magnitude of adaptation by the enemy, and who make the mistake of applying the “old techniques” they learned the last time around, can be fatal.

At the same time, the weapon used most often by the enemy to kill members of the stabilisation forces, the IED, is “discovered” more than half the time as a result of tips by locals. This means that the longer a soldier stays inside the war zone the safer his stay becomes, because the locals develop affection for him and take an interest in his well being. It may very well be that deploying soldiers for longer tours is a better policy than rotating them more often for reasons of morale.

³¹ Dr David Kilcullen, “Edward Luttwak’s ‘Counterinsurgency Malpractice’”, *Small Wars Journal*, smallwarsjournal.com/blog, April 2007.

On the surface the adversary may appear lazy and disorganised, but the reality is likely to be quite different. Soldiers in Iraq say that IEDs are very often placed in the same locations over and over, and that the vast majority of them are uncovered before they detonate. But because space and time may be immaterial to the insurgents — it makes no difference whether IEDs are placed here or there, today or tomorrow — the level of unpredictability frustrates attempts to counter their use with absolute assurance, and the penalty for complacency, particularly when nothing seems to be happening, is catastrophe.

Despite sharing a common purpose, enemy forces are likely to be cellular, fully decentralised, and not in communication with one another. Although a lack of central authority and connectivity limits their effectiveness as a fighting force and prevents the enemy from concentrating its forces, it is impossible for Coalition forces to take action against centralised and hierarchical and networked command and control mechanisms that do not exist. Furthermore, defeating one insurgent cell has no impact on the actions of others, and neither does its defeat reveal any information about the magnitude of the total threat. The population may also be mostly illiterate, meaning that little written information is subject to capture or compromise.

Is it a paradox that such a society produces combatants who can seemingly adapt effectively and sometimes rapidly to the tactics of their adversaries?

Coalition forces themselves often use the same tactics over and over. Convoys are an example, in that a limited number of routes are used repeatedly for logistics purposes. Consequently, insurgents get to “practice” over and over again how to attack the convoys, with occasional success. On the other hand, rapid adaptation may reflect innovation by forces coming from outside elements that have an interest in sustaining an unstable situation in-country.³²

These observations suggest that during 21st century stabilisation operations, adversaries will be uncoordinated and unsynchronised, and originate from a wide and diverse network of isolated groups — and hence will execute acts of violence in a completely random manner.

³² Robin Hughes, “Iran supports Iraqi insurgents, MNF-1 claims”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 11 Jul 2007, p 6.

1.3.5 Urban Combat

Military operations on urbanized terrain (MOUT) was once the domain of Special Forces, but no more.

The “average” soldier is also trained in urban combat.³³ In the words of one former U.S. commander in Iraq, “When it comes to urban combat, it is now tactically possible to do what once was considered impossible for anyone but Special Forces.”

The controversial surge advocated by General David Petraeus is concentrating on the heartland of the Sunni insurgency north of Baghdad, driving the insurgents back into the city. Local tribal leaders are “on board” to help make this happen. The plan is for U.S. forces to then collapse the remaining resistance in Baghdad.

Meanwhile, in Baghdad soldiers are out in joint security stations and coalition outposts, patrolling the streets and interacting with both the enemy and population at higher rates than observed previously. The higher ops tempo and change in tactics have also increased casualties.³⁴

1.3.6 Lagging Indicators

As with previous forms of conflict, 21st century warfare demands patience and good will from the polity.

But like statistical indicators designed to measure the health of the economy, evidence of meaningful trends in the security situation, good or bad, typically lags behind the impact of a change in strategy or tactics. A slight majority of public opinion in the United States supports giving the surge strategy a chance to prove whether progress is indeed in train, a credit to the patience of the American people to make a proper evaluation in the fullness of time as proposed by President Bush and senior military leaders.³⁵

³³ Cdr John Patch, “Operation Al Fajr”, *Marine Corps Gazette*, mca-marines.org/gazette, November 2006.

³⁴ Nathan Hodge, “US forces take to the streets as Iraq reaches ‘critical’ phase”, *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 11 July 2007.

³⁵ *Rasmussen Reports*, “Senate Vote on Iraq in Line With Public Opinion”, rasmussenreports.com, 18 July 2007.

1.3.7 *Non-lethal Weapons*

Non-lethal technology is an important enabler in the midst of tribulation.

New to the urban battle space are unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) and non-lethal weapons. UGVs are part of the U.S. Government's Future Combat Systems programme and have been designed for clearing mines and providing logistics support. Small UGVs are in development to provide situational awareness inside urban structures without soldiers having to enter them. Following the lead of unmanned combat air vehicles, projects that envisage unmanned ground combat vehicles are also underway. The present focus of developers is enhancing autonomy and intelligence to increase the distance between personnel and dangerous areas and activities.³⁶

Non-lethal weapons are primarily "active denial systems" aimed at enabling better crowd control, increasing checkpoint security, and denying access to infrastructure by making it temporarily unusable rather than destroying it.

The prototype heat-ray gun, Silent Guardian, can project a painful and debilitating high energy beam well beyond the range of ballistic projectiles.³⁷ "Laser dazzlers" that temporarily blind and disorient their victims are now available for use by Special Forces and the Army at security checkpoints in Iraq.³⁸ "Polymer ice" that makes it impossible for people or vehicles to maneuver across bridges or move into certain areas is viewed as a future means of "situational control".³⁹ Other ideas include sealing off doors and windows of buildings using "sticky" substances, disabling "troublemakers" with stun grenades, and using robots to rescue wounded personnel in dangerous areas. These systems are an acknowledgement of the adverse reaction of public opinion to what is often viewed as unnecessary or sometimes even intentional collateral damage in urban settings. Moreover, they have the potential to limit the required amount of post-conflict reconstruction and

³⁶ Andrew White, "Step Change in urban operations as UGVs face up to the enemy", *Jane's International Defence Review*, June 2007.

³⁷ *BBC News*, "US military unveils heat-ray gun", bbc.co.uk, 25 January 2007.

³⁸ *cdr salamander*, "Not be-dazzled", cdrsalamander.blogspot.com, 28 June 2007.

³⁹ Gavin Thomas, "US military looks to 'black ice'", *BBC News*, bbc.co.uk, 25 January 2007.

improve the chance for better relations with the local population after the fighting is over.

In addition to non-lethal technologies, researchers are investigating how to “see” underground and “peer” through walls⁴⁰ as other means to make urban combat more effective and less dangerous for combatants and civilians alike.⁴¹

1.3.8 The End of the Blue Collar Soldier and the Principles of Neutrality and Independence

The 21st century is the era of the “far-sighted warrior”.

Warfighters at all levels must be cognizant that their armed forces have entered a new era that requires new skills, as well as intellectual engagement at a level that may not have been essential for military service in the past. Troops must be taught not only how to walk in the alleyways and work the streets. They must also be made to understand the nature of the conflict in which they are participating, with the expectation that they will express from the bottom up what they see as solutions to the thorny problems that are bound to arise when confronting circumstances for which they have not been specifically trained.⁴² (Of course, this also assumes there is a chain of command ready and willing to listen.)

When the situation in Iraq began deteriorating and soldiers were being ambushed and killed by insurgents using improvised explosive devices, the debate in the United States centred on whether there were enough Humvees in Iraq, whether the Humvees were properly armoured, and who was responsible for this “failure”. In the meantime, soldiers cobbled together homemade armour to make their Humvees safer until the supply chain could adapt and catch up with the demand. The tragedy is that this tactical response, important as it was because lives were surely saved, was woefully insufficient.

⁴⁰ Humphrey Hawksley, “Big brother is watching us all”, news.bbc.co.uk, 15 Sep 2007.

⁴¹ The Navy too is developing unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV), primarily as a means to build underwater communication networks. See Nick Brown, “Building the web: navies chart paths to underwater networking”, *Jane’s International Defence Review*, June 2007.

⁴² LtGen Romeo Dallaire and Joanne Myers, “Bearing Witness to Genocide: Rwanda, Darfur, and the Implications for Future Peacekeeping Operations,” *Carnegie Council Breakfast Program*, ccea.org, 11 Feb 2005.

Soldiers should not only have been telling their commanders that there was a need for armour, but they should have been telling their chain of command their perception of why the environment in which they were operating was rapidly becoming a malignant one when it had been benign only a few months earlier. Additionally, soldiers should have given the commander their views of what needed to be done to reverse this downward trend. Were the reasons operational, strategic or political? Were there cultural considerations? Expressing the difference between these two responses in its most basic terms, it is simply that short-sighted “blue collar” soldiering is not good enough for a professional military.⁴³

A new emphasis on “human interoperability” is necessary.

In a similar way, the sergeant leading the troops must not only know what the general is thinking, he must also understand the general’s perspective. If the sergeant or one of his men shoots too soon and kills someone, months of negotiations towards solving a larger problem may be derailed.⁴⁴

Finally, knowledge of anthropology, sociology, and philosophy is essential for officers who profess a desire to lead troops in the 21st century.⁴⁵ Core education that develops a basic understanding of the principles associated with each of these subjects can then be applied to the specific cultural situations in which leaders and their units find themselves. Moreover, effective intelligence gathering is rooted in social anthropology and the analysis of social networks.

Blindly adhering to the principles of neutrality and independence threatens the relevance of humanitarian actors in 21st century war. Coherence and interdependence are the new watchwords.

Just as knowing how to fight in the wrong era is useless, humanitarians who insist on operating under the old principles of neutrality are ineffective.⁴⁶ Some observers have argued that humanitarian organisations (HOs) must be perceived as neutral so that all

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

sides of a conflict will permit them to move freely to help the needy. But there is no neutrality in 21st century conflict. Violations of human rights on a scale witnessed recently cannot be ignored for the sake of “neutrality”. Moreover, HOs are unable to move freely without security, and this means that they must choose which side of the conflict they will support and from which side they will seek protection — or elect not to participate.

Likewise, independence is no longer a valid principle in 21st century conflict. Full freedom of action by non-governmental organisations, without reference to the wider goals of the stabilising forces present in the region, is counterproductive. Although regular coordination may not be necessary and may even not be feasible, knowledge of what the stabilising force intends to achieve on a daily basis is essential so that civil and military organisations can work to shape the existing situation in a complementary way. A loose coupling of actors, employing the notion of “self-synchronisation” directed at achieving a common agreed effect, is the minimum that must be achieved to ensure steady progress.

Blindly adhering to the principles of neutrality and independence threatens the relevance of humanitarian actors in 21st century war. Coherence and interdependence are the new watchwords.

1.3.9 The 360-degree Battlefield

The “front line” does not exist in 21st conflict and has been replaced by a 360-degree battle space.

Theoretically, this means that information superiority and a network enabled capability (NEC) are essential elements for the agile and effective forces that are necessary to execute coalition operations. Terms such as command, control, consultation, communications and intelligence play a central role.⁴⁷

But the implications of “360-degree war” for the soldiers presently on the ground in Iraq are anything but theoretical. They live in a combat situation 24/7, in a war zone that chips away at one’s sense of

⁴⁷ Commodore Robert Howell, Royal Navy (retired), “The Front Line is Less Clear on a 360-degree Battlefield,” *Signal Connections, AFCEA International Official E-Newsletter*, afcea.org, 15 Jan 2005.

safety, emotional resiliency and character. There is no “rear” to where a soldier can retreat, no safety zone for temporary respite. There’s no relief, no rest, no relaxation. The typical soldier eats, sleeps, and lives in war, and he becomes “socialized” to survive in combat. The stress of combat in these circumstances is so great that 35 percent of Iraq war veterans seek treatment for mental health issues within a year of coming home, and thirteen percent have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁴⁸ The year 2006 saw the U.S. Army’s highest suicide rate in 26 years, with a quarter of suicides involving soldiers serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.⁴⁹

1.3.10 What 360-degree War Means Personally to a Soldier

The realities behind the reasons for why a soldier’s mental health is affected adversely are multiple, but three are most significant.

The perception that a soldier’s survival is a matter of fate, rather than the consequences of actions taken by the soldier and his unit, is the first and most devastating reality of 21st century war. Changing this perception is critical to morale and ultimate success.

The first is that the enemy doesn’t just hide among the people, he is one of the people. Like apparitions, the enemy appears out of nowhere, and when the soldier goes to retaliate there’s no one to pursue. More disturbing, the “enemy” may have acted like a friend when with U.S. soldiers during the day and transformed into a “ghost rider” at night, armed with knowledge of U.S. tactics, techniques and procedures specifically developed to minimize vulnerability to attack.⁵⁰

Improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs, car bombs, suicide attacks, rocket propelled grenades and mortar attacks are the tactics of choice for an “unseen enemy”. It doesn’t matter how well a soldier is trained, how honed his skills, or how alert he is when he’s out of his compound. Survival is perceived against these weapons as luck, as

⁴⁸ Cecilia Capuzzi Simon, “Bringing the War Home,” *Psychotherapy Networker*, Jan/Feb 2007, p 28.

⁴⁹ Pauline Jelinek, “Army suicides at 26-year high in ‘06”, *The Gazette*, 16 Aug 2007.

⁵⁰ Michael Kamber, “As Allies Turn Foe, Disillusion Rises in Some G.I.’s”, *The New York Times*, 28 May 2007.

a quirk of fate. As one soldier put it, “When your number is up, your number’s up.”⁵¹

Israel discovered the same truth in its battle against Hezbollah in Lebanon. With its better trained soldiers and more militarily powerful than ever before in its history, Israel could not defeat or subdue an enemy that attacked its more powerful foe while hiding among the people.

Instant and regular communication between a soldier and his family, while the soldier is in the midst of great tribulation, is the second reality of 21st century war.

The second significant factor is family issues. Today’s communications put soldiers in Iraq in daily contact with their immediate families — and the stress of their families’ daily lives. So the soldier is confronted with issues that affect his family, but about which he can personally do nothing. While it may seem counterintuitive, being in touch with family, particularly for married soldiers when their family members experience problems, may make it difficult for soldiers to concentrate and consequently be effective in combat.⁵² Furthermore, families back home can “walk” with their loved ones daily in a war zone and experience the constant stress of uncertainty in a personal and fearful way never possible before, a stress that should be the private domain of trained combatants. The emotional cost of war to both families and soldiers has been raised to a new level.

Families and soldiers must be warned in advance of the dangers associated with this “connectivity”. This means that family support networks “back home” are crucial. Commanders must be attuned to their soldiers’ mental health and develop a rapport that permits candid interaction. Embedding trained spiritual advisors in combat units, who can act in a counselling role and help soldiers cope with family difficulties, also becomes essential. Finally, all soldiers, regardless of their status, should undergo a series of counselling sessions specifically designed to discuss their experiences and feelings, both in the war zone and subsequently at home, upon their return to “normal life”.

⁵¹ See Simon, “Bringing the War Home”.

⁵² Ibid.

Wars fought in distant lands, by armed forces comprised of voluntary professional soldiers, constitute the third reality of 21st century war. This puts a burden on political and senior military leaders to articulate to their societies, on a continual basis, the rationale for their actions.

The third reason soldiers are faced with mental health issues is because of what they find when they finally come home. “You’re in Baghdad one day, Brooklyn the next,” says one soldier. “You feel like you don’t fit in.” Not only do some soldiers feel they can’t talk about what it means to live in a war zone when talking to friends and family, but they perceive that for most of society, life has gone on normally despite the war.⁵³

Similarly, when a soldier comes home, he wants society to tell him that what he did was worth the risk and sacrifice, that it had to be done. Many returning soldiers cling to a sense of purpose, while public opinion seems to have turned against the war.⁵⁴

This is particularly true for the more than 20,000 U.S. soldiers who have returned from Iraq with injuries, some with significant physical impairments. The services — U.S. Marines included — will retain soldiers on active duty as desk officers if possible, although some consider a “desk job” a step down from the service that brought them their injuries and will retire on disability instead.⁵⁵

Resilience of Western governments and their affluent societies, along with the perseverance to see difficult conflicts through to a successful conclusion, may be the single most important element for the future health of the professional military. A perception that the U.S. and its allies have left Iraq and Afghanistan in defeat would be uncharted waters for the modern professional armed forces and fraught with unpredictable consequences, not least how the U.S. and NATO would be perceived by their partners and adversaries in the “Muslim world”. Withdrawal from these conflicts is an action not to be taken lightly.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Linda Kramer and Richard Jerome, “Love Conquers All”, *Marie Claire*, April 2007 (UK edition), pp 172-178.

1.4 Terrorism or Criminal Behaviour?

Solidarity and political will are the first victims of differing perceptions.

No issue has more pointedly divided the West in 21st century war than the perception of terrorism.

Is the danger of trans-national terrorism overstated? Is a terrorist captured in a foreign land a prisoner of war, or is he a criminal who should be prosecuted? And if he is prosecuted, under whose law should he be charged?

What distinctions apply to someone who commits an act of terror in his own country and to the person who commits an act of terror in a foreign country?

In past conflicts, prisoners captured by their adversaries were repatriated to their home countries at the end of hostilities — an end widely acknowledged and endorsed by the international community through some sort of agreement or treaty. Once back home, the former combatants typically left the armed forces, rejoined their societies and found work in the civilian sector, never intending to return to the fight.

Today's combatant may be fighting in a foreign country as a member of a sub-state entity, dedicated to an ideology that does not represent the views of his country's government. He may be incorrigible and violate generally agreed standards of human rights. He may consider himself a noble jihadist, a soldier of God. He may never intend to return home, with hostilities in his mind ending only with his death. When captured, what is his status?

If finally returned to his country of origin, he may be released with no guarantee that he will renounce future acts of terrorism and stay at home. When the paradigm was state-on-state conflict, a few hundred of these determined fighters would not have posed a credible threat. However, in 21st century war, access to forged documents, ubiquitous travel opportunities, financial support and catastrophic weapons makes a few hundred determined fighters a force to be reckoned with, particularly in "open" Western societies.

1.4.1 *Global versus Local Terrorism*

Globalisation has severed the link between security and geography.

Osama bin Laden leads and ultimately inspires a global terrorist network, based on an ideology aimed at expelling the West from countries in the Middle East and replacing their regimes with anti-Western Islamic states, and liberating Palestine and the Muslim Holy Places.⁵⁶

One of the main selling points of this political Islam to Muslims outside the Middle East is that it offers an “antidote” to the immorality and materialism of the secular West.

Europe’s main experience is with ethnic terrorist groups seeking independence for their regions: the Irish in the United Kingdom, the Corsicans in France, and the Basques in Spain. The successful British operation against the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and its more radical counterpart, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), has become the textbook response for how best to defeat terrorism: compromise, co-option, tolerance of casualties, and patience — lots of patience.

But what about the link between global terrorism, which aims at destroying and replacing existing states with a Caliphate, and the new brand of local terrorist networks made up of individuals who have adopted this global ideology?

The latest conspiracy by extremist British doctors⁵⁷ who have sworn the Hippocratic Oath must certainly and finally debunk the myths that terrorists are progeny of the fringe elements of society — that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” — and that the “root causes” of terrorism are poverty and humiliation.

The British authorities continue to insist that the new brand of terrorist oozing from the pores of the Kingdom should legally be treated “just like” the IRA. The local terrorist, no matter his motivation, is a criminal in the British vernacular, not a combatant. British officials are

⁵⁶ Paul Schulte, “I am Osama bin Laden”, *Rusi Journal*, June 2002; 147, 3; Military Module, p 20.

⁵⁷ Kim Sengupta, Ian Herbert and Cahal Milmo, “Terror plot hatched in British hospitals”, *The Independent*, news.independent.co.uk, 3 July 2007.

adamant that no U.S.-style “war on terror” exists.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the number of cameras and databases designed specially to track people and cars in the United Kingdom continues to increase, seemingly exponentially.

The response of the British population is a resigned, determined stoicism.

The tactics of the British police are based on the government’s long-term strategy for tackling terrorism. The classified strategy has four principal strands: prevent, pursue, protect and prepare. The “prevent” strand is aimed at engaging Muslims in an effort to counter the ideologies that support terrorism.⁵⁹ The remaining strands of British strategy appear designed to allow police to monitor the activities of thousands of known or potential terrorists, collect evidence, and stop the terrorists “before it is too late” — rather than proactively intervening and destroying the growing cancer in British society’s midst.

According to British law, “captured terrorists” can be detained for only 28 days and then must be released if convincing charges cannot be produced by the authorities. Police have asked politicians to extend the right to detain suspects up to 90 days so they can intervene sooner and take the time necessary to verify their information, but without effect.⁶⁰

Contrast the British treatment of terrorists with that of France, which can place suspects in pre-trial detention for up to four years when “strong evidence” is presented.⁶¹ No one joins a terrorist cell in France for frivolous reasons. Of course, French policy creates other problems: 50% of the prison population in France is Muslim, with jails on the outskirts of Paris reaching 80%; extremist recruiters now “work” the jails, trolling for converts.⁶²

But most troubling is that the British response is not doing anything to stem the growing tide of violent malcontents. Its stoicism invites extremism.

⁵⁸ Paul Reynolds, “Declining use of ‘war on terror’”, *BBC News*, 17 April 2007.

⁵⁹ James Wither, “A Work in Progress: The United Kingdom’s Campaign Against Radicalization”, *Connections*, Winter Supplement 2006.

⁶⁰ *Wikipedia*, “Terrorism Act 2006”, en.wikipedia.org.

⁶¹ “France: 2006 Overview”, *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, tkb.org.

⁶² Pascale Siegel, “Radical Islam and French Muslim Prison Population”, *Terrorism Monitor*, Jamestown.org, 27 July 2006.

Much like the passive U.S. response to the looting in Iraq, the “looting” of British civility fans the flames of contempt for Western societies.

1.4.2 The Police Are Not Cut Out for the Big Terrorist Jobs

The Germans are the latest to decry proposals by their top security officials to actively combat terrorism — “homeland security” proposals that opposition leaders say could lead to the erosion of personal rights and jeopardize the rule of law.⁶³

The opposition prefers the British approach: determination and equanimity.

The problem, according to at least one European official, is that international crime works better than international law enforcement. While seventy-five percent of crimes used to be committed within five kilometres of where a criminal lived, seventy-five percent of crimes are now committed abroad. Internet crime, he says, is virtually ignored until after the fact, and then only 50% of Internet crimes are solved — and that is if they are detected.⁶⁴

Despite its stated intentions,⁶⁵ there is no agreement to exchange threat data within the European Union and hence no basis to track dangerous people when they move from one state to another.

“The fight against international terrorism cannot be mastered by the classic methods of the police,” according to Germany’s top security official.⁶⁶

The question is whether anticipation is required to confront terrorism, or is consequence management good enough? Time will tell, and unfortunately for the British people the answer will very likely be divulged on British soil.

⁶³ Mark Landler, “Germans grapple with terrorism threat”, *Herald Tribune*, 11 July 2007.

⁶⁴ Claims made during a presentation under the Chatham House Rule. See “News” at the *National Fraud Information Center* for current information about Internet crime, fraud.org/news.htm.

⁶⁵ European Commission, “The EU Fights Against the Scourge of Terrorism”, *Justice and Home Affairs*, ec.europa.eu, March 2006.

⁶⁶ See Landler, “Germans grapple with terrorism threat”.

1.5 Looking Back

Perestroika was meant to change the Soviet Union, and instead it changed the world. The decision of the Bush administration to go to war has also created and given birth to unintended strategic effects.

One can quote Clausewitz about the need to clearly understand what wars are intended to achieve before they start,⁶⁷ but this is a 19th century axiom that covers only part of what Clausewitz had to say. Clausewitz also warned repeatedly about the elements of chance and friction in war.⁶⁸ It is now more important for decision-makers to appreciate that unintended consequences are inevitable and that unimaginable consequences may require their full attention if they make a decision to initiate large-scale conflict. Cascading effects are bound to emerge as events unfold, most of which are likely to be negative as opportunists will make every effort to fill even the most minute vacuums. It will be the ability to discern what is most likely to happen, without becoming paralyzed at the prospect of what may lie ahead, that should guide future decision-makers.

One of the negative consequences of the conflict in Iraq is that a shortage of ground forces hampers U.S. efforts to stabilize the country. It must be acknowledged that this in turn limits what NATO can do in Afghanistan and what Europe can do in Lebanon — two linchpins of Broader Middle East security. These political-military stalemates and the failure to find WMD are the primary reasons that critics of the war are calling for a review of the decision-making process used to go forward with the intervention. They are right: How one thinks about conflict must be explored.

Regardless of what one feels about the rationale for going to war, it is essential to concentrate on what lies ahead. For 21st century conflict has “opened the eyes” of closed societies and taken all of us into a new era that intends to define its own version of what it means to communicate.

⁶⁷ “No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.” Quoted in Christopher M. Schnaubelt, “Whither the RMA?”, *Parameters*, Autumn 2007, pp 95-107.

⁶⁸ “Moreover, every war is rich in unique episodes. Each is an uncharted sea, full of reefs. The commander may suspect the reefs’ existence without ever having seen them; now he has to steer past them in the dark.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 120.

CHAPTER 2

ENLIGHTENMENT CHALLENGES THE DARK SIDE

“The world faces a massive and unprecedented global political awakening: a sudden stirring of political awareness, unleashed passions, fermenting excitement and escalating aspirations.” (Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The 2006 Christopher J Makins Lecture*, sponsored by the Atlantic Council of the United States, 31 May 2006)

The most remote parts of the planet have been integrated into the public square through satellite television, and wireless communications in combination with remote handheld devices and access to the now global Internet provide a forum where virtually anyone on the planet can instantaneously express “an opinion heard round the world” in written, audio or visual format.

2.1 Digitization of Information⁶⁹

It’s 8:20 PM on 6 March 2007, and Fox News is airing for its U.S. audience a video taken by an infrared camera from a U.S. gunship flying at altitude. On the ground are terrorists preparing to ambush a U.S. patrol, when they become aware of the aircraft overhead. Some of the terrorists quickly adjourn to a truck and drive away, others scatter into the woods, and still others flee into hiding places where they think they cannot be seen. Caught in the act of attempting to kill members of the Coalition forces, the terrorists know their fate. There is no escaping their guilt. The camera has captured the evidence. The gunship opens fire, the results never in question.

Is this a message to shore up public opinion, to inform the American people that its government is vigorously pursuing the war on terror? Or is this broadcast an attempt to deter terrorists who might try to arrange another “wedding party” in the wake of a massacre?⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The body of this section was first published as part of a series of Scope Papers developed for a seminar conducted at the NDC. See ndc.nato.int/download/research/scope_papers.pdf.

⁷⁰ *BBC News*, “US denies bombing wedding party,” 20 May 2004, news.bbc.co.uk.

Who is the intended audience of this “domestic news report”? To what extent is it also aimed at terrorists abroad?

2.1.1 *Prince Harry Goes to Iraq*

The story was designed to make Britons proud of their royal family.⁷¹

“Prince Harry of Britain will be sent to Iraq to command a tank unit,” declares the Defence Ministry to the Kingdom. Prince Harry, it’s said, insists he doesn’t want special treatment. This is a rite of passage in the footsteps of his father, Prince Charles. But the halcyon days when the dashing young prince goes off to serve with commoners and makes headlines kissing young girls are over. Royal military service is no longer simply a domestic affair.

“Al Qaeda Targets Prince” is the new headline a short two weeks later.⁷² Extremist websites are full, Sky News informs us, with death threats against Harry: “May Allah give him what he deserves.” Will the United Kingdom let its prince go into a war where he is not “just another soldier” but Target Number One? Who “wins” if Harry’s attempt to join his unit in Iraq is aborted out of concerns for his safety? Who loses? Who is the real target of al Qaeda’s zeal?

Three weeks after insurgents conduct a “dry run” in the part of Iraq where Prince Harry plans to deploy, killing two British soldiers in the same type of vehicle Harry will use,⁷³ the British authorities abandon their attempt to send Harry into the line of fire. The head of the Army says Harry’s presence in Iraq would expose the 22-year-old Prince as well as the troops serving with him to “a degree of risk that I now deem unacceptable”.⁷⁴ For his part, Prince Harry says if he is not allowed to accompany his fellow soldiers to dangerous places, then he does not want to continue his military service.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Celebrity Blog*, “Prince Harry Will Go to Iraq,” 22 Feb 2007, styleikon.com.

⁷² *Sky News*, “Al Qaeda Targets Prince,” 5 Mar 2007, news.sky.com/skynews.

⁷³ Michael Evans and James Hider, “‘Dry run’ attack forces Prince Harry retreat”, *The Times*, timesonline.co.uk, 27 April 2007.

⁷⁴ *Sky News*, “‘Specific Threats’ Halt Harry Iraq Tour,” 17 May 2007, news.sky.com/skynews.

⁷⁵ Joe Gandelman, “Prince Harry Wants To Quit Army Due To Limits Placed On His Service”, *The Moderate Voice*, themoderatevoice.com, 9 June 2007.

How did a routine news report on a celebrity blog come to galvanise the enemy? Or have such news reports become not just news, but intelligence?

2.2 Globalisation of Information

Four radical technological changes serve as the foundation of the information age.

- 1- The most important technology breakthrough is that virtually all forms of recorded information can be converted into digital format, or “digitized.” While the information may require different means to filter and constructively make sense of it, it is essential to realize that information — whether text, numeric, voice, sound, pictures, video, or some unique format that allows a computer to perform a special function such as face or voice recognition — can be converted and recorded using the identical technological basis. Like the human brain, which can process information that has been converted for storage via the body’s five senses, computers can also store information and, much like memory recall, present digitized information for human consumption with all the attendant intellectual, emotional, psychological and physiological responses.
- 2- The second is the continued impact of Moore’s Law.⁷⁶ Information can be stored with ever greater fidelity in ever greater quantities and processed ever faster. There is more digitized information stored on computers than the entire human race has the capacity to track, process, comprehend and absorb.
- 3- The third change, one which has set in motion radically new ways of transforming, manipulating, and thinking about how to use information, is the merging of communications with digitized information. This is most evident in the development of the Internet and the evolution of portable media devices, which include the mobile telephone, laptop computers, IPODs and digital cameras, all of which can record, receive and transmit virtually all forms of information at any location where a communications hub is present. The only

⁷⁶ Moore’s Law, articulated by Intel co-founder Gordon Moore in 1965, states that the number of transistors on a computer chip doubles every two years. The first microprocessor had 2200 transistors. Intel processors today boast more than a billion. See intel.com/technology.

limitation is the volume of data that can be recorded on a portable device, but this limitation is diminishing rapidly.

- 4- The fourth radical change has been the emergence of wireless communications, both through terrestrial transmission sites and satellite networks. Thanks to wireless networks, developing nations have almost overnight progressed from communication deserts to state of the art telecommunication giants, with minimal investment costs. With wireless communications, information can be exchanged between virtually any two points on the globe with negligible delay. The speed with which information can be received and transmitted may limit the rate of information exchange, but wireless bandwidths are increasing.

It must be recognized that any event can be presented to the world in real time and recorded, with no means to retrieve it, once it is broadcast to a second source.

2.2.1 A War of Ideas

Conflict in the 21st century is as much a war of ideas — a war of information — as it is a war between combatants.

A Western government passed a law that criminalizes the filming or broadcasting of acts of violence by people other than professional journalists.⁷⁷ This attempt illustrates why we in the “aging West” are being overwhelmed by our much younger adversaries in the “War of Ideas”. It also exposes the technical chasm that separates older and younger generations.

Failing to acknowledge that the information age has brought the power of ideas to the forefront, the West has been no match for groups like al Qaeda — a new breed of adversary adept at propaganda that puts a priority on reporting and “marketing” its side of the conflict, and which uses information technology to recruit and abet terrorists.

⁷⁷ Peter Sayer, *IDG News Service*, “France bans citizen journalists from reporting violence,” 6 Mar 2007, macworld.com/news.

2.2.2 Planetary Confrontation

A major “front” in the war of ideas is the Internet.

Extremists have created a new “planetary space” of violence and extremism on thousands of websites that circumvent government censorship. Hosted mostly by U.S. Internet Service Providers,⁷⁸ these “exciting and intoxicating” websites of violent radicalism are infecting young people with extremist ideas.⁷⁹

One website shows viewers how to “strike a European city” and another informs viewers how to make and use biological weapons.⁸⁰ These training websites come complete with manuals, videos and pre-recorded lessons. Communication between terrorist cells has evolved to thwart surveillance and now includes commercial encryption and the use of steganography,⁸¹ and recruiting is being accomplished through chat rooms.⁸²

Impressionable young people can download video games from the Internet in which players shoot down American soldiers with President Bush’s face, or they can play the “Mujahedeen World Cup” on the worldwide web, complete with a U.S. troop vehicle exploding over an announcer shouting “Goooaal!”⁸³

Still other websites show photos of maimed and wounded U.S. soldiers, videos of improvised explosive devices blowing up military vehicles, and videos of suicide bombers in the act. The influence these websites impose on the minds of young people can be compared to the phenomenon of “Internet porn addiction”.

Internet pornography affects many adults in the United States, and the number one consumer of Internet pornography now is children, ages twelve to seventeen. With substance addictions, the substance ingested hijacks the brain and produces the “buzz.” But in porn addiction, the mind itself is consumed and hijacked from within. Thoughts of sexual

⁷⁸ David Belt, “Global Islamism — Understanding and Strategy”, *Connections*, Winter Supplement 2006.

⁷⁹ Gilles Kepel, “Le quitte ou double d’al-Qaida,” *Le Figaro*, 26 July 2005.

⁸⁰ *Timesonline*, “Finger points to British intelligence as al-Qaeda websites are wiped out,” 31 Jul 2005, timesonline.co.uk.

⁸¹ Steganography is the practice of embedding text messages in pictures.

⁸² Thomas Hammes, “Safe havens and cyberspace”, *James Defense Weekly*, 19 Oct 2005.

⁸³ Michael Hill, “Research center at West Point aims to teach about the enemy,” *Stars and Stripes*, 12 Feb 2007, p 4.

pleasure cause the brain to produce endorphins, which in turn produce a “high.” Some leading researchers are now suggesting that treating porn addiction is so difficult that it rivals the challenge of successfully treating heroin and cocaine addiction.⁸⁴

In a similar way, young people who turn to extremist websites may become addicted to violent images. Hollywood violence, regardless of its realism, is still synthetic. But the fascination and exhilaration engendered by continuous exposure to pornographic violence — where real people suffer and real people die violently — produces at first revulsion and then a buzz, entrapping viewers with a power on par with sexual pornography. This “pleasure response” ensures that the behaviour, visiting extremist websites, is repeated over and over and that the addiction to pornographic violence deepens.

Given an opportunity, drug addicts and porn addicts will act on their addictions. Given an opportunity, those addicted to violence may act on their addiction as well, joining a terrorist organization or associating with groups espousing or planning violence. Unconscious that they are suffering from a psychological addiction reinforced by physiological factors and with no intention of fighting it, they will not — or even more frightening, they cannot — break free.

What this means for the future is unclear. But what seems certain is that without active interdiction of extremist websites, the number of terrorists — addicts whose motivation is undergirded by extremist religious ideology — will continue to increase and that their commitment to execute acts of terrorism, to include suicide attacks, is unlikely to wane anytime soon.

2.3 Media’s Impact on Security Policy

The media have always endeavoured to influence foreign policy, but rarely have print media in the recent past had immediate impact. It is television, including television on the Internet, with the advent of 24-hour global news coverage that has the greatest potential to sensationalize events and thereby influence security policies. The so-called “CNN effect” in particular has influenced security policy in primarily two ways.

⁸⁴ Tim Clinton, “Imaginary Lovers,” *Christian Counseling Today*, 2004 vol. 12, no. 3, p 86.

- 1- Because of its ability to saturate viewers with coverage of a particular story, television creates a sense of urgency in the minds of decision-makers and the public — a conviction that something has to be done in response to what is displayed on the screen.
- 2- Because of its ability to project news to a global audience in real time, television may be the first purveyor of information to the public, even before governments have become fully aware of rapidly unfolding events and their magnitude.

On the battlefield, commanders have mitigated the CNN effect by the introduction of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to conduct reconnaissance, the equipping of weapons systems with cameras that record hostile engagements, and the practice of embedding reporters with combatants during operations.

Commanders have little control, however, over controversial pictures taken by soldiers or undetected observers. Particularly if they provide evidence of wrongdoing, the consequences when these photos hit the Internet or the airwaves can be catastrophic.

The most remarkable example of the CNN effect in recent history was the real time reporting of events on 9/11. Terrorist attacks were shown to a worldwide audience before anyone had any idea what caused them. These events, which affected the psyche of every American witness, would change the direction of American security policy and lead the U.S. to take military action with far-reaching consequences.

But generally, the impact of the CNN effect is declining. There are thousands of television channels that offer everything from sports to movies to news to cartoons to music to pornography, and there has been an explosion in the number of CNN clones that broadcast news 24 hours a day, including the BBC, Fox News, EuroNews, France 24, and Al Jazeera.

Internet websites continuously broadcast everything from current news to current weather to current stock exchange reports — all in real time — and email along with “text messaging” has replaced the postal service, face-to-face interaction and talking on the telephone as the preferred means to communicate with friends, co-workers, and even strangers.

Consequently, people are subject to information overload on a continual basis, and the huge amount of data, much of it of little value or

untrustworthy or of little interest, has transformed the way people choose from where they get their news and when they view it.

News sources are no longer selected by viewers because they are the most reliable or the most honest, or because they have the best and most complete coverage. Rather, people choose their news sources because they broadcast in a particular language, are associated with a particular religious identity, or support a particular ideological or cultural orientation. Furthermore, Western values and views no longer dominate the international media. This chaos is made worse by the fact that people distrust news reported by sources other than their own.

In this new environment, the truth of what happened on 9/11, or whether Coalition forces in Iraq killed terrorists or innocent civilians attending a wedding party, have come to be seen as debatable.

There is no “ground truth” as a point of departure to debate security policy: no common view of what is true or not true, what is real or not real, what is accurate and what is not, what is moral and what is immoral, what is known and what is not known, what constitutes a threat, what constitutes a proper solution, or what reflects the rule of law.

This fractured kaleidoscope of events, encouraged by the globalisation of information and the proliferation of the media in the 21st century, is interpreted by each individual according to his own personal tastes and ultimately divides public opinion, weakens solidarity within alliances, frustrates international organisations, and creates discord between peoples.

The West must develop communication strategies that take into account the saturation of the media and the plethora of information outlets.

2.4 Changing Strategy in the War of Ideas

Western societies fail to appreciate the magnitude of the struggle at hand.

Operationally, the West is in danger of losing a war, not by military means but through discouragement. Ideologically, it faces a determined, unapologetic and unprincipled foe. Psychologically, its

adversaries thirst for revenge. Spiritually and emotionally, the rage of inspired zealots coincides with a plunge into suicide attacks and seemingly irrational behaviour.⁸⁵ Intellectually, the West is confronted by adversaries who have been educated in its universities, lived in its societies, and who understand its values very well. More significantly, they know that these values are treasured and central to the Western way of life.

Western governments and media organisations are fighting the war of ideas with a peacetime mentality.

Even more worrisome, we in the West appear to be utterly baffled when it comes to 21st century communications. The constant competition with other ideas and cultures, and the continual turmoil and change afflicting a globalised world are overwhelming the Western media — despite the far greater technological and journalistic means at its disposal.

Just as asymmetric forces are enjoying unprecedented military success against their much more powerful counterparts, this same phenomenon is being mirrored in the Fourth Estate.

The noble principles of strategic communication championed in NATO and EU countries — respect, humility, caution, inclusiveness,⁸⁶ openness to multiple points of view and fairness, all presented in the context of a 100% comprehensive accurate report — may function at cross-purposes when it comes to projecting a particular view that captures the attention of the rest of the world, and perhaps even more important, is timely. Urgency drives the reporting of events, feeds the need to respond to bad news, and challenges good judgement in the context of 24-hour television desperately searching for the “next big story”.

The principles guiding effective strategic communication in the 21st century are harsh and untidy: bluster, abrasive confidence,

⁸⁵ See Belt, “Global Islamism — Understanding and Strategy”. Belt discusses in detail global Islamism’s enduring appeal.

⁸⁶ General Communications Guidelines, *The U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, 14 December 2006, p 25. The plan can be found at uscpublicdiplomacy.org/pdfs/stratcommo_plan_070531.pdf.

imagination, personalisation and provocation, presented cryptically in the “noisy” context of rapidly evolving situations where often little is known for what may seem an uncomfortably extended period of time.

The unfortunate truth is that tactics aimed at winning hearts and minds, with the attendant sensitivity and thoughtfulness they require,⁸⁷ must fit into this new strategic framework.

But the principles that form the reality of 21st century communications are only part of the challenge. Without consensus, without a common forum, without trust, new models of communication are also necessary. Our adversaries already know this. It is time for the West to acknowledge this new truth as well and develop a strategy for action.

2.4.1 Pragmatic Complexity⁸⁸

Appropriate models that frame and set the tone for debate in the 21st century war of ideas are critical, because delivering the “right message” is no longer enough.

The reliance of Western governments on an outdated, 20th century “message influence model” is no longer effective in the complex global war of ideas. Its well-intentioned communications do not build a consensus view. Instead, they may contribute unwittingly to the diminished status of Western societies in world opinion.

Rather than the message sent, it is the message received that really counts.

Old models of communication assume that as long as a message is skilfully crafted, communication will be successful. The assumption is that broadcasting a consistent, clear message will have the “desired

⁸⁷ Fred Krawchuk, “Strategic Communications: An Integral Component of Counterinsurgency Operations”, *Connections*, Winter 2006.

⁸⁸ This section discusses pragmatic complexity according to its originators; see Steven Corman, Angela Trethewey, Bud Goodall, “A 21st Century Model for Communications in the Global War of Ideas”, *Consortium for Strategic Communication*, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State University, comops.org, 3 April 2007.

effect” on the audience. However, research has shown that even a “clear” message sent from one person to another can be misconstrued.

The sender-receiver complexity increases radically when an entire culture becomes the target audience, because regardless of the “persuasiveness” of a particular message it will be interpreted in an active way that “fits” with existing cultural and social convictions. This is particularly true when the sending and receiving cultures are not in “interpretive alignment”.

When sending a message the West must ask “what kind of ‘reality’ has this particular society that we are trying to influence constructed for itself?” with the intent of creating new “meaning-making” frameworks designed to communicate effectively with the target audience.

The messenger is part of the message. Hence communication is not a one-way street, but one of simultaneous, mutual interdependence.

Viewing communication through the lens of pragmatic complexity reveals three new realities. The first is the “double contingency”. When a Western government sends a message, it is based on what it believes its target audience does and thinks. But what the target audience does and thinks will not be influenced just by the message it receives, but also by its interpretation, its expectations, and its perceptions of the sender.

Only a message that undermines the receiver’s existing framework of meaning is likely to bring about a different response.

The second and more important reality is that communication should not be aimed at persuading the receiver to think in a particular way, but rather to overcome the receiver’s tendency to interpret and attribute meaning to what he hears so that it fits with his particular view of the world.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ It is a tenet of the NATO Defense College Senior Course that we do not try to change the basic beliefs of our Course Members. Instead, the goals of “human interoperability” are to change perceptions and reactions to the views and beliefs of other participants. A second objective of the NDC is to change the way and the level at which Course Members perceive issues. Our committee structure is designed such that no two committee members are of the same nationality.

The implication is that any conventional diplomatic message to Muslims, for example, is bound to be interpreted as evidence that the West does not understand them and is trying to impose its values. The solution to this conundrum is to send a message that does not fit with their expectations and instead perturbs their system of reference.

This is consistent with the sentiments underlying “soft power”, which is the ability to shape the preferences of others. Soft power rests primarily on three resources: culture, political values and foreign policies.⁹⁰ All three can be important sources of disruptive moves capable of causing major perturbations.

Once dispatched, messages develop their own “personalities” and can galvanise an opposing agenda.

The third reality is that the effects of messages are often unpredictable and may have delayed and indirect effects. Sending multiple messages before fully understanding their impact may be counterproductive. Interpretation is influenced by an array of factors that may be beyond the control or even knowledge of the sender, to include a society’s attempt to preserve itself and resist change.

These realities suggest that five principles should underpin any new model of communication:⁹¹

- 1- A well ordered system does not exist, and the sender should think not in terms of success but in terms of what is possible in situations of uncertainty;
- 2- Repetition of a particular message should be replaced with variation; a grand strategy may be counterproductive; careful observation of effects is crucial;⁹² messages that do not work should be immediately discarded and replaced;
- 3- Consider disruptive moves that have potential to perturb the existing system and change the existing geo-strategic context;
- 4- Expect spillover; messages meant for national audiences can have international repercussions, and vice versa;
- 5- Expect and plan for failure; do contingency planning.

⁹⁰ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power*, (Public Affairs, New York, 2004).

⁹¹ See Corman et al. “A 21st Century Model for Communications in the Global War of Ideas”. The fourth principle, spillover, has been added by the author.

⁹² Careful observation includes subjectively evaluating reactions and objectively polling public opinion.

2.4.2 Merging Principles with Practice

The principles guiding the formulation of 21st century communications should be combined with the principles that underpin the model of communication used to “send” them. We will see in the next section the possibilities they offer to gain ground in the War of Ideas when practiced.⁹³

2.5 Strategic Thinking for 21st Century Communications

Rather than rehash events with which the reader is familiar, it might be more useful to put recent events into the context of 21st century communications and draw lessons that can be applied to future planning.

2.5.1 Danish Cartoons

The cartoonists and publishers meant the publication of controversial cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed as a proclamation of free speech and freedom of the press. The message “received” by Muslims was quite different, however. Because Danish and Muslim cultures are not in “interpretive alignment”, the message received was devoid of any broader philosophical meaning related to liberty. Rather, Danish actions were viewed by most Muslims as blatant disrespect for their religious beliefs and in some conservative circles, as blasphemy.

Because of the phenomenon known as “double contingency”, Muslims reacted vocally and in some cases violently based on their interpretation of the message and their own perceptions of honour and respect. One might argue whether the consequent riots were orchestrated, but that the riots were real and frightening was incontestable.

The message received as a result of the riots was that Muslims did not value free expression. Because these cultures were not in interpretive alignment, the broader religious connotations intended by the sender were subsumed by the violence.

When a message proves to have the wrong effect, it should be discarded. Sending the “right message” repeatedly can lead to a

⁹³ Tactical approaches aimed at producing “effects” are not discussed. See Krawchuk for tactical approaches (e.g. discouraging insurgents, dissuading the population to support insurgents, disrupting recruitment, building rapport, engaging with journalists and opinion leaders), pp 39-40.

diminished status in the eyes of the audience for which the message is intended, and this is particularly true when the sender is fully aware of its negative effects. But news organisations in other non-Muslim countries joined the growing fray and also printed the cartoons.

The spillover of this “Western message” was worldwide with demonstrations and riots by Muslims across the globe. Many in the West became angry because the message they received from the increasingly violent demonstrations was that Muslims were intolerant and dangerous. Muslims, on the other hand, were trying to convey to the West that they expected their religion to be if not respected, then at least not disrespected in the Western media.

Neither side planned for failure or expected that they might have to make their points in some other less controversial fashion. Indeed, religious and ideological misperceptions continue to fester.

2.5.2 Rumsfeld’s Dismissal

The dismissal of the Secretary of Defense by President Bush after the 2006 U.S. elections was a “disruptive message”, which was intended to indicate a major change in U.S. policy. It was aimed at two national audiences, and the president wanted to show both that he “got their message”: the American people who gave a majority in both houses to Democrats for the first time in over a decade, and incoming Democrat leaders who campaigned on an anti-war platform.

The “spillover message” as interpreted by extremists was two-fold: the insurgency had successfully affected the outcome of U.S. elections, and in turn had driven Rumsfeld from office. Rumsfeld’s removal was viewed as a victory by extremists and evidence that the insurgency was succeeding in Iraq.

The timing of Rumsfeld’s departure was based on domestic political considerations. Rumsfeld could not have been removed prior to the midterm elections, and if the president had not taken action immediately afterward, his inaction would have led to greater domestic political damage. Had the president instead based his decision on how it might look to extremists, a longer “cooling off” period after the elections might have better served U.S. interests.

Every controversial decision with a potential for spillover should be debated in light of its possible consequences, particularly when foreign

policy is involved. At the very least, a contingency plan with the “right message” for extremists should have been prepared in advance of the announcement that Rumsfeld was being dismissed.

2.5.3 *Putin in Munich*

Perhaps no one has a better handle on 21st century communications than the Russians, and no Russian better than President Putin himself.

At the security conference in February 2007 in Munich, Putin’s message was loud, abrasive, provocative and personal. He knew exactly how his threats would be interpreted by his audience and the past fears they would resurrect and send into overdrive. He also knew that regardless of what anyone else at the conference said, his message would be remembered. In the end, his declaration was disruptive and threw discussions of a U.S. missile defence system in Poland and the Czech Republic into disarray.⁹⁴

The spillover effect was also immediate. Russia’s near abroad got the message that Putin intended: Russia is back, and you better not forget it.

2.5.4 *Strategic Consequences of Immediate U.S. Withdrawal from Iraq*

An American withdrawal before Iraq can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself would be perceived throughout the world as a strategic defeat for American interests with potentially catastrophic consequences both in the region and beyond. This negative and disruptive message would embolden Iran, and U.S. friends in the Gulf and Middle East would view it as abandonment of the region⁹⁵ and a failure to fulfil a moral obligation. Energy resources could face increased risk, and outside forces that currently foment chaos in Iraq could turn their full attention to NATO’s efforts in Afghanistan.

⁹⁴ President Vladimir Putin, Speech at the 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 10 February 2007, English translation. Mr Putin refers to the proposed U.S. system in Europe as “Star wars”.

⁹⁵ Brent Scowcroft, “Getting the Middle East Back on Our Side”, *New York Times Op-Ed*, 4 January 2007.

If such a foreign policy message were to be seriously considered by U.S. leaders, contingency plans should be developed to address perceptions that will be created in reaction to a move with significant and surely unintended geo-strategic and geo-theological consequences.

2.5.5 Tony Blair's Appointment as Envoy for the Middle East

Mr Blair's appointment was intended to send a message that the members of the Quartet⁹⁶ were serious about restarting peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The message was on the mark, as both Israel and the Palestinian Authority welcomed his appointment.

Given that the original message was deemed a success by both sender and receiver, it was repeated but with a view to the future: a reference was made to the meeting that would be held in one month's time as well as to the peace conference later this year involving the U.S., Israel and some of its Arab neighbours.⁹⁷

This kind of disruptive message from the West — confident, imaginative, provocative, widely heeded, specifically geared toward countries in the broader Middle East and with positive spillover, and which at the same time provides evidence of good will and sincere interest in the region — represents historic possibilities in the geo-strategic environment. A small victory in the war of ideas, it epitomises successful 21st century communication.

⁹⁶ The Quartet comprises the U.S., the Russian Federation, the EU and the UN.

⁹⁷ *BBC News*, "Blair chairs first Quartet talks", news.bbc.co.uk, 29 July 2007.

CHAPTER 3 POST-9/11 SECURITY

The Post-9/11 era will be greatly affected by both conflict's new nature and populations desperate to make themselves heard.

Just as people are affected by the explosion of communication and the potential for interaction with others from around the globe, nations and their governments are also affected by an international community constantly in conversation and in which the all-pervasive impact of globalisation plays an increasingly intrusive role.

As always with change, there are unintended consequences: the unknown unknowns. As they reveal themselves, it remains to be seen whether they will be positive, negative, or something in-between. There is one consequence already emerging, and it is the substitution of relationships with something far more superficial, something referred to here as “links”.

Relationships are based on realities: what we know about one another to be true. Links on the other hand, are based on our perceptions: what we think to be true about one another.

21st century war is accelerating the already increasing velocity of communications, whose sheer volume further stimulates the political awakening and aspirations of formerly closed societies. People of all societies are searching for an outlet to unleash their passions, and the communications networks that now engulf the earth are the vehicle. But this vehicle is not designed to build relationships. It is designed to link together people who already have relationships, or people who are anxious to share what they believe with someone else at the other end of the line who appears ready to listen.

This next section looks at the evolving nature of relationships and links between people, states and their governments. Set aside are the political and legal messiness of the international system and the many agreements, obligations, charters and treaties that bind it together into an

“international order”. Analysis is based solely on the emerging trends of a world caught up in 21st century conflict, and the swelling communication in a medium already flooded with data.

3.1 The 21st Century Geo-Strategic Security Environment

The Post-9/11 Era will be shaped more by perceptions than realities.

3.1.1 *Links versus Relationships*

The information age has substituted relationships with “links”.

Technology makes it possible for people to join and “collaborate” within large “virtual communities”, without actually ever meeting anyone else in the group. Individuals are able to carry on extensive, long term interaction, without reference to geography, and to develop a sphere of influence that far exceeds what was achievable in the past. The weakness associated with this wide-ranging discourse is that the links that members of these communities develop with the other anonymous personalities tend to be intellectual and shallow, not emotional or deeply personal in the sense of developing relationships and sharing intimate exchanges with other people that we know.

The implication is that the “reality” of relationships in a world of links is replaced by perception. Although members of a group may share a common forum and share a consensus of opinion, there is no formal basis for trusting each other outside the “meeting room”, aside from the quality of the intellectual exchange and the data that flows on the link.

The 21st century “ties that bind” will be links based on perceptions.

3.1.2 *Links between States*

The information age is also substituting relationships between states with links.

Relationships, based initially on the reality of shared security interests, led NATO member nations to join together in collective defence and member states of the EU to integrate their economies and gradually open their borders. Their long-time association eventually led to shared values, which would motivate all member governments to adopt democratic standards and help NATO to survive the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Moreover, these relationships would act as a magnet to aspirants anxious to join their security and economic destinies with the West. This attraction, although interpreted differently, would also work on the Russian Federation as it built its energy links with European states.

These same binding relationships would eventually lead NATO to turn its attention outward and debate the need for collective security and a global perspective. New partnerships with “contact countries” would emerge. For its part, the EU would begin efforts to join the security and defence policies of its willing members.

NATO and EU member states exchange information and intelligence, converse deeply and fervently about issues of concern,⁹⁸ discard obsolete concepts and develop new ones, and reach agreement so that the organisations to which they belong can be pro-active and effective when they take action. States connected by relationships fight together and share risks together and form the most effective coalitions.

The member states of NATO and the European Union share deep relationships.⁹⁹ NATO and the EU have worked successfully to transform themselves and have so far endured the tests of change.

Links on the other hand, based on the perception of shared interests, lead to non-permanent political and economic associations subject to dissolution when membership becomes inconvenient. Other international organisations, aside from the EU and NATO, are based on links.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The author acknowledges the many problems associated with information sharing and debating political issues among NATO and EU members. Nevertheless, the potential for cooperation is ever present and often occurs informally or bilaterally to overcome institutional constraints.

⁹⁹ This sentiment was captured eloquently by Chancellor Angela Merkel, “Germany’s Foreign and Security Policy in the Face of Global Challenges”, 42nd Munich Conference on Security Policy, 4 February 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Some might claim that the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is based on more than shared interests. However, it is difficult to assert credibly that leaders whose interests lie primarily in maintaining the political status quo share “values”. Recent efforts by Russia to create peacekeeping forces within CSTO to legitimise its own interests are another example of how it is used by member states. See Vladimir Socor, “Russia Setting Up ‘Collective Peacekeeping Forces’”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Jamestown Foundation, 3 Oct 2007.

Nation states without a history of close association with one another will not develop relationships in the 21st century.

Partnerships based on existing relationships or common values will be the exception, not the rule. Globalisation encourages economic links, not political relationships, and serves the interests of “business partners” independent of the values with which they identify.

Political leaders have become celebrities and are known by their personalities as much as their principles. Their movements are tracked, and their thoughts and opinions are conveyed continuously to a constantly present audience. Governments can voice their views on television in their own time zones with the assurance that they will be heard repeatedly by those with links to the global communications environment and made available at the “right time” in every time zone on a global scale.

Government representatives negotiate agreements in multilateral groups that may exist for a relatively short period of time or whose members change frequently. Wide availability of automatic translation of others’ spoken languages and written discourse into one’s own, courtesy of the information age, means that language barriers do not have to be surmounted. Moreover, English is rapidly becoming the “lingua franca”.

Economic links are formed easily and independently of geo-strategic relationships. Iran, for example, has recently negotiated or discussed gas and oil-related ventures with Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Syria, India, Pakistan, and Armenia, as well as with 90 foreign firms from countries that include the United Kingdom, The Netherlands and Spain. It has purchased advanced military hardware from Russia. All this, despite being accused of trying to develop nuclear weapons with malicious intentions and currently under UN sanctions. The number of states seeking common economic advantage with Iran would surely be even greater if Iran were “at peace” with the international community. Despite its growing number of economic links, Iran has only limited diplomatic ties with the same nations and is unlikely to develop a deep relationship with any of them.

Russia has done the same, establishing energy links with numerous actors thirsting for its oil and gas. Its relationships with those countries, however, are strictly business and purposely limited.

This pattern is consistent across the map, and its implications cannot be underestimated:

- The only relationships between states that will exist in the future are those that exist already. This bodes well for healthy international organisations based on close relationships that are underpinned by shared interests and values, such as NATO and the EU; it also bodes well for their closest partners.
- The UN Security Council will continue to be largely ineffective, as only three of the five permanent members share a close relationship, and all of them share a growing number of links.
- Member states that drift away from organisations to which they belong or closely partner will be orphaned indefinitely. Countries such as Ukraine are in danger of political drift for the foreseeable future.
- By the same token, states that NATO and the EU might wish to draw into their inner orbits must be kept in range of their gravitational pull.
- The creation of new and enduring organisations with meaningful interaction beyond narrow economic or intermittent ideological interests is highly unlikely. This means that Russia, India, China and Iran will remain independent actors with the associated limitations imposed by autonomy. Regional groupings formed by activists like Hugo Chavez of Venezuela will come unglued once the activists are deposed or voted out of office.
- Widely dispersed ideological networks based on inspirational links such as al Qaeda have a limited life expectancy, are vulnerable to aggressive interdiction, and will never coalesce into something akin to a state or Caliphate. This does not make the networks any less dangerous or their ideology any less toxic. This also does not mean that weak states infected with radicalized elements are immune from failing if extremists come to power.
- Economic links between states will increase due to globalisation. Rather than undermining existing political relationships between closely aligned states, they will intensify the formation of loosely coupled “communities of interest” that will include all the associated actors.
- Mass migration will strengthen the tendency to form links rather than relationships among countries. Changing demographics will continue to erode identity within the gaining states, with the effect of undermining and weakening existing relationships.

- Links between people around the world will continue to proliferate, increasing the already exponential interaction occurring across the planet. Ironically, these links will threaten relationships.

3.1.3 An Opportunity to Shape the International Community

While demographics suggest that the nations of Europe and to some degree North America will become less influential economically, their “soft” and “hard” power will not decline. The “Western moment” will not pass — NATO and the EU will not face rivals in the form of other effective international organisations. Rather, the challenge for the transatlantic relationship will be to “manage” difficult actors, both state and sub-state. For NATO, this means that transatlantic consensus can impose its values and collective will as it did in the Kosovo campaign in 1999. For Europe, it means its influence as a regional actor will not be diminished and its global “weight” will increase despite its shrinking populations. NATO and the EU or their members will continue to influence the most intractable and difficult problems.

“Common knowledge” and “common truth” that eludes the world as a whole will be present in the “Western fora”. How they are used to influence the views of other nations which will act on their perceptions, falls into the sphere of strategic communications and concerted action in the form of a comprehensive approach.

The West, as the only part of the world with the potential to act collectively in the Post-9/11 era, has the resources at its disposal to shape global realities and in turn global perceptions if it can find the political will to do so.

3.2 War in the Post-9/11 Era

21st century war will be as much about perceptions as it is about realities.

3.2.1 *Preparing for the Next War*

High intensity firepower is necessary to win 21st century war. “Cultural know-how” and state-of-the-possible technology, side by side, are the keys to winning the peace.

There is a tendency to prepare for the next war based on the last one. Without a cataclysmic event in the interim, such planning makes sense.

But mistakes of the last war should not be repeated. Lessons must be applied, and creative thinking must take place about what will be different the next time around.

In the next 21st century war, the public will retain its aversion to casualties. It will accept that its soldiers fall in combat. It will not accept attrition tactics by an enemy reminiscent of the Vietnam quagmire.

The capacity to execute high intensity warfare with a ferocity and precision that bring conflict to a quick end will still be necessary to satisfy the impatience of Western publics.¹⁰¹ Special Forces will remain important for the conduct of pre-conflict operations to “prepare” the battle space and to root out “hard targets” that may survive the initial intervention.

Once high intensity combat is concluded, forces must be prepared to transition immediately and with great speed to stabilisation operations. There can be no lull, no lapse, no breach of decision-making that would permit a successful military campaign to degenerate into post-conflict chaos.

The current success of combat forces against the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan proves that a “transformed” force can fight and win against an opponent that uses what some commentators call Fourth Generation tactics.¹⁰² What Western forces lack however, are cultural skills.

Once the heavy lifting is over and the “switch” is thrown, the intervention forces must turn their attention to cultural concerns, familiar with all things local to the area they will safeguard. In the words of one soldier in training in the United States, “There is a fundamental shift in

¹⁰¹ This capacity also provides insurance against state-on-state conflict involving emerging powers should the future “bring back” more conventional challenges.

¹⁰² See Lind, “Understanding Fourth Generation War”.

what it means to be a marine. We are not only warriors anymore, we are teachers, we are builders, we are doctors and engineers.”¹⁰³

Exotic non-lethal instruments must be available to the warfighter to overcome the advantage familiarity gives an enemy. The enemy has likely lived in the country in which he is fighting. He knows the roads, the ground and what it is made of, where he can find water, what is required to survive in the local weather, and he may know the people among whom he will “hide”. This can only be overcome if the enemy cannot “remain invisible” once he leaves the shadows.

Success in 21st century war demands an absence of sanctuaries.

“Persistent reconnaissance” should be the goal of technological developers in the West. Enemy troops should be continuously tracked, IEDs “sniffed out”, bad guys “made visible” inside buildings, and routes “watched” prior to convoys using them. Car bombs and suicide bombers should never be permitted to strike from the same location twice. There can be no sanctuary for any hidden activity by a member of the insurgency.

“Schizophrenic interaction” that merges distant family concerns with life-threatening environments will plague 21st century warfighters.

Western soldiers in the midst of war will be communicating daily with their families. A soldier could be frivolously listening to his daughter describing an argument with her boyfriend one moment and fighting for his life the next. This kind of schizophrenic interaction will be normal. Commanders who are preoccupied with the welfare of their soldiers may themselves be accused by their families of neglecting them for something else “more important”.

Similarly, without embedded reporting as a constant source of information to their publics, soldiers will take it upon themselves to create “documentaries” of the conflict and put them on the Internet. Everyone has a story, and everyone wants to tell it — particularly soldiers who find themselves living and dying in the midst of tribulation.

Soldiers should possess the means to bring lethal force against their adversary when the firepower on hand is not enough. Stealthy cruise

¹⁰³ *BBC News*, “Coaching US troops on Iraqi culture”, news.bbc.co.uk, 19 July 2007.

missiles equipped with GPS and powered by hypersonic engines could strike their targets with pinpoint accuracy at supersonic speed within minutes of being notified, even if launched from hundreds of miles away.¹⁰⁴ This capability, directed by soldiers on the ground or in aircraft overhead, would be much more accurate than a ballistic missile or an artillery round fired over the horizon and much faster than a conventional cruise missile.

Finally, protection against exposure to lethal toxins should be available, and these medications should be safe. A persistent drug that protects soldiers from the effects of nerve gas has been developed.¹⁰⁵ Similar protective efforts should be encouraged.

Whatever war in the future turns out to be, it will shape global realities. The West must consider that the rest of the world's view will be based not on realities, but on perceptions — and not perceptions supported by an understanding of existing realities, but rather perceptions based on what it thinks it knows. This is why engagement in the war of ideas is equally important to the conduct of 21st century war.

3.2.2 *A War of Ideas*

In 21st century war, the war of ideas precedes the battle, and it must be adapted to circumstances.

When conflict is intense, it will require one kind of “message”. When fighting for the peace, it will require another. In both cases, governments must be prepared to take the offensive or they will find themselves on the defensive.

Extremists will use every opportunity to sow discord and discontent, to deceive their audiences, and to embarrass the West. A lie is as good as a truth if it achieves its objective. Extremists know that excessive violence is always reported — over and over and over — by the media. All they must do is create mayhem, and the media broadcasts high definition pictures of the aftermath with much speculation and commentary to the rest of the world. The enemy has no boundaries when

¹⁰⁴ Caitlin Harrington, “US hypersonic engine test points way ahead”, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 May 2007.

¹⁰⁵ *BBC News*, “Nerve gas antidote made by goats”, news.bbc.co.uk, 24 July 2007.

employing instruments at his disposal to succeed in a war he does not intend to lose.

For its part, the international media has been conditioned to “watch for action” 24 hours a day. “Messages” can reach every “linked” person on the planet nearly simultaneously. Entire cultures can rise up in violent anger in response to a message that does not please them, regardless of whether the information it is based upon is true or not.

Truth will be ambiguous in the 21st century war of ideas.

News can be used by the enemy as intelligence, and Western intelligence can prove unreliable. Bad news spreads fast, and good news about how the West is succeeding against the insurgency is greeted with scepticism. The Internet was meant to enhance collaboration, and instead it is used by some to breed division and abet violence. A sender may be “always right”, but according to what the receiver hears may be “always wrong”.

The 21st century war of ideas requires aggressive, adaptive planning. “Ad-hoc-ery”, not grand strategy, will rule the day.

3.2.3 Conflict and Communication

Coordination between what will happen on the ground and what is reported in the media is the “perfect world” in 21st century war.

But typically the reality is quite different. What happens on the ground depends as much on the resistor as the antagonist, and often incidents instigated by the “bad guys” happen without notice.

Communicators may be forced to catch up, and if their report waits for perfect information — which may never be available — or “more information” or “enough information” or “confirmation”, it will be too late for the West to say anything useful that might overcome perceptions.

The consequence will be that Western governments will be driven on the defensive for hours, days, weeks, or even years with respect to the incident in question, as has already happened more than once.

Coherence may not be appropriate when reporting on the conflict. Sometimes one audience wants to hear one aspect of what is happening, a second audience something else completely. For example, when the Kosovo campaign was initiated, it was welcomed by most Muslims. Swedish public opinion, on the other hand, was outraged. Two different messages stressing two different themes, perhaps addressing conflicting aspects of the campaign — protecting human rights for Sweden and bombing the Serbs into submission for the Muslims — will have to be crafted.

The interim between what happens and what is reported by the media is a dangerous period, particularly if the enemy plans to use the incident as the basis for its own information campaign. It may be hours before Western forces are on-scene, and by then the insurgency's media allies may already have arrived, photographed a choreographed set, and reported to its "target audience" the terrible tragedy caused by immoral Western forces that have no regard for collateral damage.

The "right message" at the "right time" tailored to the "right audience" does not guarantee success. But a timely "right message" based on the information available, to the audience most affected, might prove successful in most instances. "Going for the gold" may not be the right approach when urgency, importance and uncertainty all intersect.

Conflict and communication are sisters in 21st century war. They can be made to work together, but they may have very different views of what is said and when to say it.

3.3 Forever Changed

One of the aims of democracy, and some say its most important aim, is that "we may think what we like and say what we think".¹⁰⁶ The public square is a place to debate ideas and to argue our most strongly held beliefs. It is also a place to be heard when we feel the urge to express ourselves.

Most of Western civilization has been practicing free expression and exercising freedom of conscience for centuries. NATO and the EU,

¹⁰⁶ Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., 1860, from *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, found in *Power Quotes*, edited by Daniel Baker (Barnes and Noble Books, 2004), p 97.

their members all democratic and free, stand as examples of free thinking and free expression.

People experiencing this freedom for the first time have entered the public square. Many of these new arrivals are hearing criticism directed at them that they do not like and may not understand, and without knowing how to debate or discuss issues openly and unemotionally with others who come from a different worldview, they react with confusion, hurt and outrage.

In the wake of recent violence, a Muslim colleague urged his mostly Western audience to remember that “the actions of a few fanatical Muslims are not a rejection of Western values.”¹⁰⁷

We are witnessing a world in transformation, overflowing with renewed passions. The geo-theological nature of the resulting global dialogue is part of this change. The West should not dread this dialogue, but embrace it.

A policy of “democratisation” could still prove constructive as an aim for Western foreign policy, but its architects will have to consider how democracy is perceived by its new practitioners. While populations in the West view democracy as a system of government that functions regardless of political interests, it is viewed in other regions as a means to put people with the same interests, even religious interests, into power. Accounting for these differences will avoid “surprises” for which the West is not prepared.

NATO and the EU have two advantages in this new and expanding geo-theological dialogue: their existing partnerships with many Muslim countries via a variety of circumstances, to include the MD and ICI within NATO; and realities, not perceptions, form the basis for their view of the world.

There is much reason to be optimistic about the future. Given cohesion and political will, NATO and the EU can meet the looming and difficult challenges facing them and their democratic partners.

¹⁰⁷ A sentiment expressed under the Chatham House Rule.

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