INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THE 21st CENTURY: RECONCEPTUALIZING THREAT AND RESPONSE

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FOREWORD

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has developed a national security strategy designed to eliminate the conditions that spawn asymmetric threats. An important part of that is helping build stable, legitimate governments in nations which allowed or supported terrorism and other forms of asymmetric aggression. This has led the United States to renewed involvement in counterinsurgency.

The United States, particularly the Army, has a long history of counterinsurgency support. During the past decade, though, this has not been an area of focus for the American military. To renew its capability at counterinsurgency, the military is assessing 21st century insurgency, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and revising its strategy, operational concepts, organization, and doctrine.

This monograph is designed to contribute to this process. In it, Dr. Steven Metz and Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Millen argue that 20th century strategy, operational concepts, organization, and doctrine should not be applied to 21st century insurgency without further refinement. They contend that there are two major variants of insurgency which they label "national" and "liberation." Most existing strategy, operational concepts, organization, and doctrine are derived from American experience with national insurgencies, but these need to be adapted when confronting liberation insurgencies.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this special report as part of the ongoing refinement of the Army's understanding of the threat posed by insurgency in the 21st century security environment.

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SUMMARY

Insurgency has existed throughout history but ebbed and flowed in strategic significance. Today the world has entered another period when insurgency is common and strategically significant. This is likely to continue for at least a decade, perhaps longer. As the United States confronts this threat, extrapolating old ideas, strategies, doctrine, and operational concepts is a recipe for ineffectiveness. Reconceptualization is needed.

The strategic salience of insurgency for the United States is higher than it has been since the height of the Cold War. But insurgency remains challenging for the United States because two of its dominant characteristics--protractedness and ambiguity-- mitigate the effectiveness of the American military. Furthermore, the broader U.S. national security organization is not optimized for counterinsurgency support. Ultimately, a nation is only as good at counterinsurgency support as its weakest link, not its strongest.

Existing American strategy and doctrine focus on national insurgencies rather than liberation ones. As a result, the strategy stresses selective engagement; formation of a support coalition if possible; keeping the American presence to a minimum level to attain strategic objectives; augmenting the regime's military, intelligence, political, informational, and economic capabilities; and, encouraging and shaping reform by the regime designed to address shortcomings and the root causes of the insurgency. The key to success is not for the U.S. military to become better at counterinsurgency, but for the U.S. military (and other elements of the government) to be skilled at helping local security and intelligence forces become effective at it.

A strategy for countering a liberation insurgency must be different in some important ways. Specifically, it should include the rapid stabilization of the state or area using the appropriately sized force (but larger is usually better); a shift to minimum U.S. military presence as rapidly as possible; rapid creation of effective local security and intelligence forces; shifting the perception of the insurgency from a liberation one to a national one; encouraging sustained reform by the partner regime; and cauterization--the strengthening of states surrounding the state facing an insurgency.

Sustained capability enhancement is crucial, even when the United States is not actively engaged in counterinsurgency. This includes leader development, wargaming, concept development, research and analysis, professional education, and focused training. Capability enhancement should include increasing the ability and willingness of regional states and other regional security organizations to provide counterinsurgency support, improved homeland security, and methods for early warning of insurgency, preventative actions, and the creation of early-stage support packages.

The United States must make clear whether its approach to counterinsurgency is a strategy of victory or a strategy of containment, tailoring the response and method to the threat. A strategy of victory which seeks a definitive end makes sense when facing a national insurgency in which the partner government has some basis of legitimacy and popular support. In liberation insurgencies, though, a strategy of victory is a very long shot, hence a strategy of containment is the more logical one.

Because insurgents attempt to prevent the military battlespace from becoming decisive and concentrate in the political and psychological, operational design must be different than for conventional combat. Specifically, the U.S. military and other government agencies should develop an effects-based approach designed to fracture, delegitimize, delink, demoralize, and deresource insurgents. To make this work requires an independent strategic assessment organization composed of experienced government officials, military officers, policemen, intelligence officers, strategists, and regional experts to assess a counterinsurgency operation and allow senior leaders to make adjustments.

When involved in backing an existing government, the U.S. force package would be designed primarily for training, advice, and support. It should be interagency from the inception. In most cases, the only combat forces would be those needed for force and facility protection, more rarely for strike missions in particularly challenging environments. Modularity should increasingly allow the Army to tailor, deploy, and sustain such packages.

Sustaining the commitment is an important part of force packaging. Successful counterinsurgency takes many years, often a decade or more. Consideration must be given to rotation procedures for deployed forces. To some extent, contractors can relieve this

pressure, particularly since many of the training, advice, and support functions in counterinsurgency do not have to be performed by uniformed military. But as Iraq and Afghanistan have shown, the use of contractors brings a range of other problems associated with training, control, discipline, and protection.

Given the likelihood of continued involvement in counter-insurgency support, the Army will need to consider increasing the number of units that have particular utility in this environment, such as Intelligence and Engineers. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations, both of which also have high utility in counterinsurgency support, need refocusing and restructuring. As a minimum, a larger proportion of these units should be in the active component. And, both need greater autonomy to be effective in a counterinsurgency environment rather than being assigned to the commander of a maneuver unit. In general, though, the Army should not develop specialized units to "fight" counterinsurgency.

Leader development and training for counterinsurgency must emphasize ethical considerations and force discipline, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. Most importantly, leader development must focus on inculcating the Army with the ability to innovate and adapt. Organizationally, the U.S. military should develop matrix and networked organizations. Professional education and training must be increasingly interagency and multinational.

INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THE 21st CENTURY:
RECONCEPTUALIZING THREAT AND RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

Insurgency has existed throughout history but ebbed and flowed in strategic significance. At times insurgency forms "background noise" to competition or conflict between great powers. At other times, it is strategically significant, undercutting regional stability, drawing outsiders into direct conflict, and spawning humanitarian disasters. From a systemic perspective, the lower the chances of direct armed conflict between great powers and the greater the tendency of major powers to sponsor insurgency as a form of surrogate conflict, the greater the strategic significance of insurgency. When war between great powers is likely, insurgency may simmer on but becomes strategic background noise.

Today the world has entered another period when sustained, large-scale conventional war between states is unlikely, at least in the near term. But mounting global discontent arising from globalization; the failure of economic development to keep pace with expectations; the collapse of traditional political, economic, and social orders; widespread anger and resentment; environmental decay; population pressure; the presence of weak regimes; the growth of transnational organized crime; and the widespread availability of arms are making insurgency common and strategically significant. This significance is likely to continue for at least a decade, perhaps longer.

Counterinsurgency support has been part of American strategy since the 1960s, but today insurgency is mutating, thus forcing an intense reevaluation of U.S. strategy and operational concepts. To simply extrapolate the ideas, strategies, doctrine, and operational concepts from several decades ago and apply them to 21st century insurgency is a recipe for ineffectiveness. Reconceptualization is needed for the U.S. military and other components of the government to confront the new variants of this old challenge and to distinguish insurgency's enduring characteristics from those undergoing change.

DEFINITION AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

Insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power. It is used by those too weak to do otherwise. Insurgency is characterized by protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (jungles, mountains, urban areas), psychological warfare, and political mobilization—all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favor. Insurgents may attempt to seize power and replace the existing government (revolutionary insurgency) or they may have more limited aims such as separation, autonomy, or alteration of a particular policy. They avoid battlespaces where they are weakest—often the conventional military sphere—and focus on those where they can operate on more equal footing, particularly the psychological and the political. Insurgents try to postpone decisive action, avoid defeat, sustain themselves, expand their support, and hope that, over time, the power balance changes in their favor.

In a broad sense, insurgencies take two forms.[1] In what can be called "national" insurgencies, the primary antagonists are the insurgents and a national government which has at least some degree of legitimacy and support. The distinctions between the insurgents and the regime are based on economic class, ideology, identity (ethnicity, race, religion), or some other political factor. The government may have external supporters, but the conflict is clearly between the insurgents and an endogenous regime. National insurgencies are triangular in that they involve not only the two antagonists—the insurgents and counterinsurgents—but also a range of other actors who can shift the relationship between the antagonists by supporting one or the other. The most important of these other actors are the populace of the country but may also include external states, organizations, and groups. The insurgents and counterinsurgents pursue strategies which, in a sense, mirror image the other as they attempt to weaken the other party and simultaneously win over neutrals or those who are not committed to one side or the other.

The second important form are "liberation" insurgencies. These pit insurgents against a ruling group that is seen as outside occupiers (even though they might not actually be) by virtue of race, ethnicity, or culture. The goal of the insurgents is to "liberate" their nation

from alien occupation. Examples include the insurgency in Rhodesia, the one against the white minority government in South Africa, the Palestinian insurgency, Vietnam after 1965, the Afghan insurgency against the Soviet occupation, Chechnya, the current Taleban/al Qaeda insurgency in Afghanistan, and the Iraq insurgency.

The distinction between a national and a liberation insurgency is not always rigid and clear. A single insurgency can contain elements of both, and shift emphasis during its lifespan. The Chinese communist insurgency, for instance, began as a national insurgency, shifted to a combination of liberation and national during the Japanese occupation, and then shifted back to a national one. The Viet Cong/North Vietnamese insurgency in South Vietnam grew out of a liberation one, became more national in focus before extensive American involvement in the conflict, again emphasized the liberation element from 1965 to the early 1970s, and then shifted back again.

Liberation insurgencies are difficult to counter. The approach that usually works against national insurgents—demonstrating that the government can address the root causes of the conflict through reform—does not work nearly as well since the occupiers are inherently and insurmountably distinct from the insurgents and their supporters. Their outsider status cannot be overcome by even the most skilled information campaign. What motivates the insurgents is not the lack of jobs, schools, or the right to vote, but resentment at occupation, interference, and rule by outsiders or those perceived as outsiders. Reform is not the key to a solution as it normally is in national insurgencies.[2] For this reason, skilled insurgents prefer to have their movement seen as a liberation one rather than a national one, thus making the mobilization of support and internal unity within the insurgency easier.

Insurgencies vary across time and regions but most follow a common life cycle. During the period of organization and coalescence, insurgent movements tend to be weak, disorganized, and often inchoate. Survival is the overwhelming priority. In the earliest stage, there may be diverse, competing insurgent movements within a nation. If so, establishing a reputation—"brand identity"—is important, leading some of the proto-insurgencies to undertake bold, even foolhardy actions.[3] Other insurgents may opt for the underground approach and remain hidden as long as possible

while organizing, recruiting, training, learning their craft, and accumulating resources. Each method of mobilization—by publicity-generating action or by building an underground organization—has proven successful, particularly if the regime fails to recognize the seriousness of the threat at an early stage.

At some point every insurgency must open direct operations against the regime in order to succeed. This can take the form of guerrilla warfare, terrorism, assassination of officials, sabotage, and other types of irregular or asymmetric violence. At the same time, the insurgents must continue to improve their skills, learn their craft, accumulate resources, and mobilize support. They may do this by cultivating external alliances, smuggling, robbery, narcotrafficking, kidnapping, black marketing, money laundering, counterfeiting, merchandise pirating, illegal use of charities, racketeering, and extortion. They may buy arms, obtaining them from ideological allies, or capture them from government forces. Most—but not all—insurgents also seek to augment their legitimacy, mobilize greater public support and, in some cases, expand their international acceptance.

Insurgents have a variety of methods to do this, including propaganda, information warfare designed to popularize the perception that they are seekers of justice forced into violence by the unwillingness of the regime to give them a voice in the political system, actions which demonstrate that they offer a better alternative than the regime, and simple boldness and courage—"armed propaganda"—designed to demonstrate the incompetence and brutality of the regime. In any case, insurgents inspire resistance and recruitment by defiance, particularly among young males with the volatile combination of boredom, anger, and lack of purpose. Insurgency can provide a sense of adventure, excitement, and meaning that transcends its political objectives.

Thus the greater the pool of bored, angry, unoccupied young men in a society, the more fruitful ground for insurgent organizers to work. The job of mobilizing support and acquiring resources is even easier for insurgents in a liberation conflict since they can draw on the inherent dislike people have of domination by "outsiders." As Khair al-Din Hasib, the "father" of pan-Arab nationalism, stated, "Whenever, wherever there is occupation, there will be resistance."[4]

An insurgency continues so long as both sides either feel that they will ultimately prevail, or believe the costs of stopping the conflict will be greater than the costs of persisting. Often insurgencies drag on so long that entire generations emerge that have known nothing but conflict, so their fear of peace—which is an unknown, and thus anxiety-causing—surpasses their fear of conflict. An insurgency may end when one side (or, less often, both) decides that no matter how long they continue, they cannot prevail, or that the costs of ending the conflict are less than the costs of continuation. In other words, it is less an assessment of a preferred future that drives insurgents or insurgent supporters than an assessment of who will prevail—the insurgents or the regime. The normal practice is for large segments of the population to "bandwagon" by throwing their support to the side they believe will win. Ultimately the denouement may be a negotiated settlement, or the conflict may simply peter out as the insurgents melt back into the population or go into exile. Less often, insurgencies end with decisive victory, either when the insurgents seize power or attain some other objective, or the regime eradicates all the insurgents and prevents recruitment of new ones.

During the past century, most insurgencies failed. The majority were crushed before they developed a critical mass of skill and support, or were simply incapable of attaining such a critical mass. Successful insurgencies were those with effective force protection and counterintelligence capabilities able to prevent the counterinsurgents, whether a regime or outside occupiers, from pushing the conflict to decision in the military realm until the power balance shifted in their favor. They did this either by making the political and psychological realms decisive (since it was much easier for them to attain parity with the counterinsurgents in this sphere), or by postponing decisive military encounters until they weakened the government through guerrilla, political, and psychological operations.

Starting an insurgency is easy. A dozen or so dedicated radicals with access to munitions and explosives can do it. Building an effective insurgency, though, is difficult. History suggests that it requires a specific set of conditions. The importance of these is determined, in part, by the effectiveness of the regime. When facing a determined regime with an understanding of counterinsurgency and the resources to undertake it, all of these conditions must be present for any degree of success by the insurgents. When facing a weak, disorganized, corrupt, divided, repressive, or ineffective

regime, insurgents can overcome the absence of one or even several of the conditions.

Preconditions.

The most basic precondition for insurgency is frustration and the belief that this cannot be ameliorated through the existing political system. This may be widespread among a population or limited to a radical elite which then has to convince the more passive population of the need for violent change. A conspiratorial history and culture are also important. In such societies, insurgents can utilize or take over existing patterns of underground activity, webs of secret societies, or widespread criminal activity. A society already accustomed to conspiratorial activity is a naturally fertile ground for insurgency.

Effective Strategy.

The strategy of an insurgent movement is built on three simultaneous and interlinked components: 1) force protection (via dispersion, sanctuary, the use complex terrain, effective counterintelligence, etc.); 2) actions to erode the will, strength and legitimacy of the regime (via violence and political-psychological programs); and, 3) augmentation of resources and support. There are, though, multiple ways to undertake these actions; insurgent strategies vary over time and across regions. Often insurgents have been able to seize and hold the strategic initiative due to inherently greater flexibility and absence of ethical or legal constraints. They are also unburdened with the need to run a government and maintain security and exercise authority throughout the country, and less constrained by law and normal ethical considerations. Every successful insurgency is dominated by a feeling that the end justifies the means.

Effective Ideology.

National insurgencies in particular depend on ideology to unify, inspire, explain why the existing system is unjust or illegitimate, and rationalize the use of violence to alter or overthrow the existing system. (Because liberation insurgencies have the "organic" mobilizing factor

of alien occupation, they depend less on artificial mechanisms such as ideology). A coherent ideology explains existing discontent and anger and offers a remedy. It builds on preconceptions, propensities, grievances, resentments, hopes, desires, beliefs, cultural variables, historical factors, and social norms. An effective insurgent ideology, in other words, must "fit" a given society. In the 20th century, the combination of Marxism and nationalism particularly was powerful. The nationalistic angle made the ideology broad and unifying; Marxism focused anger and resentment on the regime, and explained why the insurgents could expect ultimate success even when the odds against them appeared long.

Effective Leadership.

Leading an insurgency is difficult. Insurgent leaders must convince people to undertake extraordinary danger and hardship for extended periods of time with a very small chance of a positive outcome. Successful insurgent leaders are those who can unify diverse groups and organizations and impose their will under situations of high stress. Psychologically, effective insurgent leaders are so dedicated to their cause that they will persevere even though the odds are against them. They become obsessive "true believers" of nearly mythical status, driven by vision, often building a cult of leadership. Similarly, they tend to believe so strongly in their cause that they become completely ruthless, willing to do anything necessary to protect their movement and weaken the counterinsurgents. Insurgent leadership is not a business for the faint of heart, but for the utterly committed and obsessive.

Resources.

In the broadest terms, insurgents need five types of resources: 1) manpower; 2) funding; 3) equipment/supplies, particularly access to arms, munitions, and explosives; 4) sanctuary (internal or internal+external); and, 5) intelligence. The amount needed varies from insurgency to insurgency. Some, for instance, need mass support, others do not. Some only need public passivity. Insurgent resources can be provided, seized, or created. The first can come from outside sponsors, domestic supporters, or from the ineptitude of

the counterinsurgents (e.g., the government may provide sanctuary by being unaware of the presence of the insurgents). Funding, equipment, and supplies are the resources most often seized, but in some insurgencies, particularly those in Africa, manpower is seized through violence as insurgents undertake forcible recruitment (impressment). Just as in nature an organism seeks to obtain food with the minimum energy expenditure, most insurgencies would prefer to be provided resources, but will seize or create them if none are provided or, in some cases, if provided resources come with too many strings attached.

20th-CENTURY INSURGENCY

21st-century insurgency is clearly a descendent of a similar phenomenon that blossomed in the "golden age of insurgency" in the second half of the 20th century. At that time, many states in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and even on the periphery of Europe were ruled by weak, corrupt regimes; unpopular dictators; new, fragile governments; or colonial occupiers. Socialist radicalism and nationalism inspired revolutionaries around the world and provided an ethical justification for political violence. Increases in literacy and improvements in communication helped to mobilize the disenfranchised and the repressed. The Soviet Union, unable to undertake direct expansion, adopted an indirect strategy in which it supported insurgency to weaken the West. Later China and Cuba followed suit. Toward the end of the 20th century, indirect aggression via state support to insurgency was used in Mozambique, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Western Sahara, Uganda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kashmir, and elsewhere.

Most importantly, insurgency flowered in the 20th century because of the invention of a powerful and effective insurgent-based strategy: Maoist "People's War." People's War began when a highly motivated cadre mobilized a support base among the rural peasantry using nationalism and local grievances (often including corruption, repression, excessive taxation, and issues associated with land ownership). This was particularly powerful when it could take the form of a liberation insurgency. The Chinese insurgents, for instance, gained strength when they painted their movement as an anti-Japanese one (even though they did little actual fighting with

the Japanese). The same was true of the Viet Minh. What happened in these cases—and may happen in Iraq—was that the insurgents built their movements on liberation grounds but were able to segue into purely national insurgencies after the occupiers left.

People's War called for a period of underground political organization followed by guerrilla war.[5] The ultimate objective was seizure of power and creation of a communist state. While the insurgents were prepared for a long struggle involving occasional military setbacks, they sought to launch increasingly larger military operations. In the "pure" form of Maoist People's War, the final phase was conventional maneuver warfare after the regime was weakened by prolonged guerrilla operations. Many of the great successes of the Maoist approach (such as China itself and Vietnam) came through conventional military victory.

Throughout the course of People's War, psychological operations and political mobilization paralleled military actions. In fact, violence was viewed as "armed propaganda" designed for maximum psychological effect such as demonstrating the weakness or incompetence of the regime or provoking it into excessive reactions which eroded its support. Military actions which had maximum direct effect on the insurgents often alienated the public (as well as the international community). Violence also deterred government supporters and inspired potential insurgent supporters. The Algerian National Liberation Front, Viet Minh and Viet Cong, for instance, focused assassinations and terrorism on unpopular local officials and landowners. Often the regimes were blamed when their use of force hurt innocents while insurgents often were not—one of the core asymmetries of insurgency is an asymmetry of expectations concerning behavior. Thus one of the key decisions for counterinsurgents was deciding whether the political cost of armed strikes against the insurgents was worth paying.

The People's War strategy also directed insurgents to develop "liberated areas" that they could administer more justly than government-controlled regions. This too was a means of psychological warfare and propaganda designed to win over the "undecideds" to the rebel side. In fact, that was the essence of People's War and the core of its triangularity: the conflict was an armed and political-psychological competition between insurgents and counterinsurgents for the "undecideds."

Often outside supporters played an important role in People's War, providing sanctuary, training, equipment, funding, and supplies. In fact, 20th-century insurgency was a form of proxy conflict caused by the nuclear stalemate between the superpowers. Because direct confrontation between the West and East risked escalation to the thermonuclear level, proxy conflict was considered a safe option.[6] By the 1980s, the United States—recognizing that insurgency often required "fighting fire with fire"—began promoting insurgency against pro-Soviet regimes in places such as Nicaragua and Angola.

Despite its long history with insurgency and other forms of irregular war, the United States was organizationally, doctrinally, conceptually, and psychologically unprepared for People's War when it first confronted it in Vietnam. The Army, at least at the senior level, placed little stress on the mundane but vital aspects of counterinsurgency, such as training the South Vietnamese security forces, village pacification, local self-defense, and rooting out insurgent political cadres, at least at the higher level. Perhaps more importantly, even though a number of experts in the United States developed an astute understanding of the Vietnamese communist strategy and organization, Washington never forced the South Vietnamese regime to undergo fundamental reform and thus it never solidified its legitimacy.[7] Army Chief of Staff General Earle G. Wheeler reflected the thinking of President Lyndon Johnson and his top advisors when he said, "The essence of the problem in Vietnam is military."[8]

By the time the United States did develop an organization to synchronize the military, political, and psychological dimensions of the struggle—the Civilian Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program—it was too late.[9] The United States never supported CORDS to a degree comparable to the major military operations, the North Vietnamese military was thoroughly entrenched in the south, the South Vietnamese regime was widely perceived as corrupt and illegitimate, and the American public alienated. Even though the Viet Cong were militarily crushed in the 1968 Tet Offensive and saw their political underground decimated by the Phoenix Program (which came later), the shift of power away from the regime was irreversible and carried on by the other element of the insurgent alliance—the North Vietnamese Army.[10]

When the United States again confronted insurgency in the 1980s, it drew on the Vietnam experience to develop a "carrot-and-stick" strategy which simultaneously promoted democratization, economic development, dialogue, and defense. In addition, Washington limited where it became involved. Recognizing that counterinsurgency support was a very long-term proposition and that support by the American people and their elected leaders would have to be sustained, the United States limited its involvement in counterinsurgency to areas of high national interest, especially Central America and the Caribbean.

In addition, indirect means rather than the large-scale application of American military force was the preferred method. The 1987 *National Security Strategy*, for instance, specified that indirect military power, particularly security assistance, was the primary tool of counterinsurgency. The 1988 *National Security Strategy* was even more explicit, emphasizing that U.S. engagement "must be realistic, often discreet, and founded on a clear relationship between the conflict's outcome and important U.S. national security interests."[11]

This understanding of insurgency was eventually codified with the 1990 release of Army and Air Force doctrine in FM 100-20/AFM 3-20, *Military Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict*. Success in low-intensity conflict, according to this manual, followed adherence to five "imperatives": political dominance, unity of effort, adaptability, legitimacy, and perseverance. The pivotal concept was *legitimacy*. This assumed the people of a country will decide whether the government or the insurgents can offer them the "best deal" in terms of goods and services and then support that side. Following this line of thought, U.S. activity in counterinsurgency was based on the concept of internal defense and development (IDAD) under which the host government "identifies the genuine grievances of its people and takes political, economic, and social actions to redress them." But while FM 100-20, like the national security strategy, noted that the U.S. military role in counterinsurgency would "normally center on security assistance program administration," it did not rule out direct tactical involvement of U.S. forces.

Simultaneously, other governments around the world also came to grips with Maoist-style insurgency and developed effective strategies, doctrine, and forces to counter it. Some utilized the American approach, combining carrot-and-stick. Others, such as the

Guatemalans and Peruvians, implemented a "mailed fist" strategy which also proved effective (albeit brutal). By the end of the 20th century, counterinsurgency thinking had caught up with insurgency, and the tide had turned. Insurgency's "golden age" was over—at least for a brief period.

MUTATING INSURGENCY

While many governments have discovered ways to counter Maoist People's War, the factors that motivate insurgents—the perception of repression, anger, frustration, and an inability to ameliorate these through legitimate political means—persist.[12] As a result, insurgency is mutating. Some things, though, have not changed. Insurgency remains complex, grinding, dirty, and violent, mired in multiple levels of ambiguity and dragged out for an extended period of time. But there are key changes or discontinuities with effects that are not yet fully understood:

The Meaning of Sanctuary.

There are fewer geographically remote areas outside government control where insurgencies can gestate, so the initial stages of development tend to take place "hidden in plain sight" in cities and other developed areas. The ability of governments, particularly those affiliated with the United States, to find and destroy targets from a distance has made embedding and dispersal the preferred forms of protection for insurgents rather than isolation. The ongoing global trend toward urbanization means this will continue—future insurgencies will tend to form and develop in cities rather than rural areas.[13] While this is necessary for self-protection, dispersion will make it difficult for insurgent movements to concentrate enough power to seize control of a state. Maoist People's War was effective because it was able to weaken the regime psychologically and politically, then launch decisive military blows. Modern insurgents may never develop enough military power to undertake conventional operations and thus have to rely on terrorism and psychological and political means. This has a lower chance of success than the Maoist approach. Widely dispersed, networked insurgencies are difficult to eradicate, but also less likely to gain victory than the more concentrated insurgencies of the 20th century.

Diversification of Support.

While insurgent movements continue to seek external support and many find it important, they can no longer rely on it to the extent that Cold War insurgents could, in large part because of the ability of the United States to pressure external supporters. Insurgents therefore must devote extensive effort to fundraising or income generation. This increasingly leads them into coalition with organized crime, or to become criminal organizations themselves. While this is, in a sense, a distraction, it diminishes the need for external sponsors and even the mass public. To a much greater extent, contemporary insurgents only need the passivity of the public rather than its active support.

Extended Connections.

Interconnectedness and information technology have facilitated the linkage of various insurgent movements and allied organizations, including criminal enterprises across regions and around the world. Coalitions and partnerships that would have been impossible during the Cold War are becoming the norm. The best example is the transnational Islamist insurgency which includes a dizzying array of subcomponents.

Asymmetric Power Projection.

Insurgents have developed the capability for strategic power projection (terrorism), strategic intelligence, and the building of wide-ranging regional and global linkages without the need for a patron like the Soviet Union or Cuba. Eventually this may allow them to deter states with a less-than-vital interest from providing counterinsurgency support.

Shifting Rallying Cries.

The content of insurgent ideology has shifted. While there are a few lingering Marxist insurgencies, an ideology based on transnational, radical Islam is clearly on the ascent. In some ways it poses greater challenges than Marxism. For instance, clerics play a

central role in political mobilization but are considered protected and hence unacceptable targets. Because of its transcendentalism, radical Islam can inspire suicide terrorists—a phenomenon uncommon in secular insurgencies. But radical Islam is also a less forward looking and inclusive ideology than Marxism; its appeal outside its historical cultural realm is limited. In the broadest sense, the ideologies which underlie 21st century insurgencies decry the injustice of globalization. Because the United States is seen as the engineer of the existing world order, many insurgent ideologies define the United States and its partner regimes as the enemy.

Transparency.

Flowing from information technology, globalization, and the international movement of people, transparency has changed the nature of psychological warfare, making it easier to transmit information (including rumors and lies) and to build linkages, but harder to sustain perceptions or themes that do not closely match existing predispositions. In an environment with multiple and instantaneous sources of information, perceptions can be shaped but not controlled.

The mutation of insurgency is likely to continue. This may take several directions. For instance, insurgencies may become increasingly networked, with no centralized command and no common strategy, only a unifying objective. This would make them even less effective in terms of seizing power or attaining other political goals, but more survivable in the face of effective counterinsurgent actions. Insurgencies also may develop connections, even alliances with legitimate political organizations which share their resentment of the U.S.-dominated global economic and political system. It is conceivable that insurgent movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America could find political allies or sympathetic affiliates in North America, Western Europe, and the Pacific Rim. This would accord them a degree of legitimacy which would greatly complicate the task of counterinsurgency. Insurgencies may follow the path of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia* [FARC]) and evolve into purely criminal organizations with only the thinnest veneer of politics. Or, more ominously, they may acquire weapons of mass destruction and thus develop an increased deterrent or compellence capability.

CURRENT SITUATION

The strategic salience of insurgency for the United States is higher than it has been since the height of the Cold War. What takes place within states is of intense concern to those outside, particularly retain, to the United States in its role as engineer of global and regional order. Interconnectedness between states, their permeability, the globalization of economies, the transparency arising from information technology, and the intermixing of people around the world give every conflict regional and global repercussions. "In an increasingly interconnected world," states the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, "regional crisis can strain our alliances, rekindle rivalries among the major powers, and create horrifying affronts to human dignity."[14] In Colombia, for instance, "the link between terrorist and extremist groups . . . challenge[s] the security of the state" while in Africa, "civil wars spread beyond borders to create regional war zones."[15] Internal conflicts create refugee flows which destabilize neighboring states. They often spawn organized crime as rebels turn to smuggling to raise capital and acquire weaponry. As the images of internal war are broadcast or emailed around the world, awareness rises and, with it, demands for action or intervention—the days are gone when millions could die in civil wars with barely a whisper to the outside. And internal conflicts and the weak states or ungoverned areas they create often serve as breeding grounds for terrorism so the connection between internal conflict and American security is direct.

Insurgency is challenging for the United States because two of its dominant characteristics—protractedness and ambiguity—mitigate the effectiveness of the American military. Rapid decisive operations are seldom, if ever, strategically decisive; long-term involvement with extensive interagency activity and partner cooperation is the norm. Since the military battlespace is not decisive, ultimate success requires that the U.S. military play a supporting role to other government agencies and, more importantly, to the partner governments and their security forces. Furthermore, the broader U.S. national security organization is not optimized for counterinsurgency support. Even when the military is effective at the security component of counterinsurgency, other government agencies are less effective at political, economic, psychological, and intelligence challenges.

Ultimately, a nation is only as good at counterinsurgency support as its weakest link, not its strongest. Because insurgency is a holistic threat, counterinsurgency must be integrated and holistic.

The strategic and doctrinal framework with which the United States must face 21st century insurgencies does provide a foundation. But there are serious gaps. Some key strategic documents overlook insurgency all together. For instance, the 2004 *National Military Strategy* states, "While the Armed Forces' foremost task is to fight and win wars, the character of conflict has changed, necessitating capabilities to defeat a wide range of adversaries—from state to nonstate actors."[16] While not using the word "insurgency," it refers to "illegal armed groups that menace stability and security."[17] But its strategic principles are agility, decisiveness, and integration which "support simultaneous operations, the application of overmatching power and the fusion of U.S. military power with other instruments of power."[18] This perspective is not integrated fully with characteristics that history has shown to be most effective in counterinsurgency including perseverance, restrained use of force, and emphasis on intelligence, law enforcement, and political action. Moreover, the section of the strategy which deals with deterring aggression does not mention sponsorship or support of insurgency as a form of aggression.[19] The strategy does mention stability operations but views them purely as a follow-on to major combat operations. In aggregate, the 2004 *National Military Strategy* applies the conceptual foundation and methodology developed for conventional combat to irregular warfare rather than developing a new or separate approach.

While Joint and Service doctrine does deal with insurgency, it tends to overlook the ongoing mutations, treating 20th-century Maoist People's war as a universal model for insurgency. *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, for instance, incorporates counterinsurgency under nation assistance which includes security assistance, foreign internal defense, and humanitarian and civil assistance.[20] Foreign internal defense (FID) is the most salient concept. It is defined as "the total political, economic, informational, and military support provided to another nation to assist its fight against subversion and insurgency." This "has traditionally been focused on helping another nation defeat an organized movement attempting to overthrow the government."[21] Initially developed

from the U.S. experience in Vietnam, FID is designed to "free and protect a nation from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency by the building of viable institutions that respond to the needs of society."[22] Economic, social, informational, and political needs are the focus of U.S. effort. However, military assistance is usually necessary to provide security.

While foreign internal defense continues to seek improvements in a partner state's internal defense and development, it is no longer aimed purely at countering insurgency. FID programs may also address other, interrelated sources of instability such as drug trafficking, terrorism, and ethnic rivalries.[23] The military's role in FID can be categorized as indirect support such as security assistance, combined exercises, and exchanges; direct support such as civil-military operations, military training to host nation forces, logistics support, and intelligence and communications sharing; and combat operations.

Recent Army doctrine incorporates counterinsurgency into stability operations and support operations. The emphasis tends to be less on the direct interests of the United States in countering insurgency—that insurgency can be used as proxy aggression or that it can spawn terrorism—than on the indirect adverse effects of such conflict. For instance, Field Manual (FM) 3-07 states, "Many modern conflicts do not directly affect the interests of the United States. Others, however, affect U.S. humanitarian interests, access to markets and materials, the safety of our citizens, and the stability necessary to sustain democratic government. These threats to U.S. national interests may require stability operations or support operations in response."[24]

Army doctrine also is based on FID. The core logic is triangular: the insurgents and the counterinsurgents are simultaneously at war with one another and competing for public support. FM 3-07 states:

> Success in counterinsurgency goes to the party that achieves the greater popular support. The winner will be the party that better forms the issues, mobilizes groups and forces around them, and develops programs that solve problems of relative deprivation. This requires political, social, and economic development. Security operations by military and police forces, combined with effective and legitimate administration of justice, provide the necessary secure environment in which development can occur.[25]

According to the doctrine, the primary role of the Army in counterinsurgency is managing security assistance programs.[26] While U.S. forces generally do not engage in combat, they may conduct strike operations if required.

Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq led the Army's leaders to recognize the need for new counterinsurgency doctrine. An interim field manual was published in October 2004, with other versions intended to follow.[27] While this was an ambitious undertaking, it did not grapple with new forms of 21st-century insurgency, instead treating 20th-century insurgency patterned after Maoist People's War as a universal model. For instance, the new doctrine defined insurgency as an "organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government" which would exclude the conflict in Iraq prior to national elections, or the post-Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.[28] It treats the Maoist-style objective of forming an alternative state and the organization of a Maoist-style insurgency—leadership, combatants, cadre, and mass base—as a universal form.[29] Given this perspective, the recommendations for counterinsurgency are those designed against a Maoist-style insurgency and largely reflect the lessons of Vietnam. Using a national insurgency as the sole model, the doctrine gives no consideration to the special requirements of a liberation insurgency.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Until recently, the United States became involved in counter-insurgency to support a regime whose overthrow would threaten important or vital national interests. A range of criteria were used to decide whether intervention was warranted:

- The nature of the regime facing the challenge (the United States is less likely to commit to the defense of a repressive regime than during the Cold War);

- The nature of the insurgents (the United States is more likely to assist regimes threatened by insurgents linked to al Qaeda or its affiliates);

- The economic or geostrategic significance of the state facing an insurgency (the United States is more likely to become involved in counterinsurgency in the Americas than in Africa,

and in economically important areas than those of little economic value);

- The traditional relationship of the threatened state with the United States (it is important for the United States to remain a steadfast security partner) ;

- The human cost of the insurgency (the United States is somewhat more likely to intervene in a conflict that involves humanitarian disasters or genocide than ones that do not).

Historically, the decision to intervene usually was made when a pro-American regime faced an active insurgency that it could not handle on its own. In the post-September 11, 2001, strategic environment, a second mechanism for American involvement in counterinsurgency has emerged: an insurgency that arises out of a stabilization and transformation operation such as ENDURING FREEDOM or IRAQI FREEDOM. Since such stabilization and transformation operations are likely to remain an important element of American national security strategy for the duration of the global war on terrorism, the U.S. military is likely to be used in counterinsurgency support into the foreseeable future.

When the United States supports a beleaguered partner, there are existing political and security structures but America's leverage may be limited. A regime that faces a serious insurgency threat often has major political, economic, and social shortcomings. Because an insurgency was able to coalesce and develop indicates that the regime is unable or unwilling to recognize this fully. The problem for the United States is finding an effective way to encourage or, if necessary, force the partner to undertake needed reforms at the same time that its security capabilities are improved. All too often a partner will conclude that, if they are important enough to attract Washington's commitment to help them, American policymakers will not let them fall and thus will overlook continued repression, corruption, or other shortcomings.

In addition, American assistance makes partner regimes feel more secure which can, in their eyes, diminish the urgency of change. This complicates counterinsurgency support and makes it difficult to retain the backing of the American people and other nations. For instance, El Salvador undertook serious reform in the 1980s only when the U.S. Congress threatened to cut off support if significant

improvements were not made in the protection of human rights, civil-military relations, good governance, and military effectiveness. Ironically, the greater the U.S. interest in protecting a partner regime, the less leverage Washington has.

The second mode of counterinsurgency support—one associated with intervention in a failed state or as a follow-on to a stabilization and transformation operation—can be even more challenging because existing security and political structures are weak or nonexistent, and because it is much easier for the insurgents to cast their struggle as one of liberation. This is not news: American strategists fully recognize that a national insurgency is easier to counter than a liberation one. The problem is that the United States sometimes must assume a dominant role when there is no effective local partner (as in Vietnam in 1966, Afghanistan, and Iraq). The dilemma is that this allows the insurgency to become seen as liberation. It is difficult to shift back to a national conflict. Even when the United States helps establish a local government and security forces (as in Vietnam by the early 1970s and Iraq at the present time), the new regime may be perceived as an American proxy. It can be difficult to mobilize backing for counterinsurgency under these conditions, even when the future offered by the United States and its local partners is, in objective terms, significantly more attractive than that proposed by the insurgents. The natural human tendency is to rally to fellow citizens, even those with whom the public is not inherently comfortable such as the former Ba'athists in Iraq, against outsiders.

Existing American strategy and doctrine focus on national insurgencies rather than liberation ones. As a result, the strategy stresses selective engagement; formation of a support coalition if possible; keeping the American presence to a minimum level necessary to attain strategic objectives; augmenting the regime's military, intelligence, political, informational, and economic capabilities; and encouraging and shaping reform by the regime designed to address shortcomings and the root causes of the insurgency. In most cases, this will include a coordinated reform program across the military, intelligence, political, informational, and economic spheres. The key to success is not for the U.S. military to become better at counterinsurgency, but for the U.S. military (and other elements of the government) to be skilled at helping local security and intelligence forces become effective at it.

While this makes perfect sense for a national insurgency, one size does not fit all. A strategy for countering a liberation insurgency must be different in some important ways. This includes:

- Rapid stabilization of the state or area using the force required. Normally, larger is better since perception and presence are integral components of stabilization. Preferably, the stabilization force should be a multinational and integrated interagency organization operating with a United Nations mandate. The U.S. contingent should not be the largest if other effective multinational partners are available.

- A shift to a minimum U.S. military presence as rapidly as possible.

- Rapid creation of effective local security and intelligence forces.

- Shifting the perception of the insurgency from one of liberation to a national one. This will include augmenting the legitimacy of the local government and security forces by distancing them from the United States. *The more the local government and security forces are seen as proxies or subordinates of the United States, the more difficult it will be for them to establish legitimacy.* This process will entail having the local government and military forces take the lead in projects and operations whenever possible (even if they might approach them differently than the United States).

- Over the long term, adjusting the actions of the local regime by encouraging sustained reform.

- Cauterization—the strengthening of states surrounding the state facing an insurgency. In this way, the strategic damage can be contained should the insurgency escalate or become uncontrollable.

Some elements of U.S. strategy will be relevant to both national and liberation insurgencies. For instance, sustained capability enhancement is crucial even during those times when the United States is not actively engaged in counterinsurgency. This includes leader development, wargaming, concept development, research and analysis, professional education, and focused training. This will be particularly difficult to sustain in the interregnums between

counterinsurgency operations, but is vital. The tradition within the U.S. military has been to develop an impressive understanding of and skills at counterinsurgency when engaged in such an operation, and then to let the expertise atrophy afterwards, thus forcing a blank slate relearning process when the Nation is again committed to counterinsurgency support ("reinventing the wheel" in other words). This is not an effective or efficient pattern.

Capability enhancement should include increasing the ability and willingness of regional states and other regional security organizations to provide counterinsurgency support. This is easier said than done. Because counterinsurgency tends to be a dirty business and because the emergence of an active insurgency is seen as a taint on a regime, security organizations in regions where insurgencies occur have tended to shy away from collective responses. They are more than willing to work on cooperative ventures for peace operations, but not counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency support traditionally has come from outside a region. Breaking down this prejudice and building effective regional counterinsurgency systems would be useful. Along similar lines, synchronization of counterinsurgency thinking among key American partners like the NATO states, Australia, and India would augment U.S. capabilities.

Since insurgents have developed a strategic strike capability via terrorism, improved homeland security also must be seen as part of capability enhancement for counterinsurgency support. When assessing the wisdom of engagement in counterinsurgency support, American political leaders must consider the domestic social repercussions and whether the involvement might spawn terrorism aimed at the United States. This possibility must not deter the United States from actions in the national interest, but is a consideration. It means that the Department of Homeland Security should be consulted and integrated into counterinsurgency strategic planning.

The United States, along with global and regional partners, needs better methods for early warning of insurgency, preventative actions, and the creation of early-stage support packages. One of the ironies and problems with insurgency is that the regime facing one often does not recognize it or denies it until the insurgency has had time to coalesce and develop. This is understandable—to admit that a serious insurgency challenge exists is to admit that national policies

and means of governance have been flawed—but it nonetheless means that the insurgents are given a head start. The insurgents, in other words, always begin a conflict with the strategic initiative. The threat will be difficult to remedy until challenged regimes stop denying their problems. Moreover, the United States would have to commit resources before a conflict explodes. This will be difficult but the payoff would be immense—preventing an insurgency or nipping one in the bud is always easier than turning the tide on one that has taken root.

Third, the issue of when and how to engage in counterinsurgency support will remain an open one in U.S. strategy. Specifically, the question of whether this should be an "all or nothing" proposition is vital. Should there be a counterinsurgency corollary to the "Powell Doctrine" which states that the United States will only engage in counterinsurgency support when the interests at stake are high enough that we are willing to sustain the effort to the end and to use decisive force, even if that requires a decade or more and a significant commitment of money and personnel? Or is a modest amount of counterinsurgency support to a beleaguered friend better than none at all? In reality, this is probably not an either/or choice. The United States has and will continue to become involved in both "major" counterinsurgencies where the stakes are high and sustained, high level engagement is justified as well as "minor" ones where it is not. The key is to understand the distinction and not let what should be a minor case segue into a major commitment.

The United States must make clear whether its approach to counterinsurgency is a strategy of victory or a strategy of containment, tailoring the response and method to the threat. Traditional thinking is that victory, defined as the eradication of the insurgency as a political and military force and the amelioration of the factors that allowed it to emerge in the first place, is the appropriate goal. This is captured in Joint and Army doctrine. But given the extent of America's global commitment and the time and resources it takes to attain ultimate victory in counterinsurgency, a strategy of containment merits consideration. This would be similar to the contemporary Israeli approach. The Israelis know they cannot win the "hearts and minds" of the Palestinians. They know they cannot ameliorate the root cause of the insurgency since that is the existence of Israel itself. They therefore have built a strategy designed to keep the insurgents ineffective for as long as it takes.

A strategy of containment might distinguish between different types of insurgents and only commit the United States to countering an insurgency likely to support international terrorism or aggression, or one attempting to overthrow a truly democratic regime. Such a strategy would return to a minimum U.S. presence once an acceptable level of stability was attained. Americans might initially protest that such a strategy of containment is antithetical to the current broader tenets of U.S. national security strategy, but it is certainly within our tradition. We have, for instance, chosen to manage the problem of Haiti for the past century, preferring to reintervene as required rather than engineer the sort of wide scale social, political, and economic transformation that it would take to prevent instability from reemerging. It is conceivable that in far away places like Iraq and Afghanistan, we could adopt a strategy of intervention and stabilization when necessary without an attempt to transform the societies or a commitment to protracted counterinsurgency.

Which strategy makes more sense? As Clausewitz reminds us, "The first, the supreme, and the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make" is to understand "the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature." A strategy of victory which seeks a definitive end makes sense when facing a national insurgency in which the partner government has some basis of legitimacy and popular support. In liberation insurgencies, though, a strategy of victory is a very long shot. No matter how much effort, money, and blood the United States pours in, it will be unable to change the image of an outsider imposing a solution. Even if the United States focuses on creating a friendly regime, that regime will be unlikely to attain legitimacy and support (except by turning on the United States). In such insurgencies, a strategy of containment is the more logical one.

One additional strategic factor merits consideration: some strategic thinkers contend that the United States is now facing the first insurgency of a global scale—created by the interlinkage of multiple national insurgencies—led by a network motivated by radical Islam.[30] The Global War on Terrorism has all of the characteristics of an insurgency: protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, dispersal, the use of complex terrain, psychological warfare, and political mobilization designed to protect the insurgents and eventually

alter the balance of power in their favor; avoidance by insurgents of battlespaces where they are weak and a focus on those where they can compete, particularly the psychological and the political. The insurgents are fighting a total war with limited resources; the counterinsurgents are self-restrained by ethics and a desire to control costs. This belief suggests that the appropriate American response is to build a grand strategy modeled on counterinsurgency which reflects the differences between national and liberation insurgencies.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

One of the core dynamics in insurgency and counterinsurgency is the "learning contest." Insurgents tend to be highly adaptable and flexible, at least at the tactical and operational levels. To match them, counterinsurgents must also be adaptable and quick to learn. Adaptability can be maximized by an institutional culture which stresses it and gives maximum autonomy to lower level leaders; by refining methods for the collection, dissemination, and implementation of lessons learned; and by adopting what the U.S. Marine Corps calls a "matrix organization" of functionally organized teams from across the U.S. Government and, for military units themselves, a networked structure with central coordination but local autonomy.[31]

Because insurgents attempt to prevent the military battlespace from becoming decisive and concentrate in the political and psychological, operational design must be different than for conventional combat. One useful approach would be to adopt an interagency, effects-based method of counterinsurgency planning focused on the following key activities:

- *Fracturing* the insurgent movement through military, psychological, and political means, to include direct strikes, dividing one part against another, offering amnesties, draining the pool of alienated, disillusioned, angry young males by providing alternatives, and so forth. Relationships within insurgent movements are not necessarily harmonious. Cabals within the insurgency often vie for leadership or dominance. Identifying these rifts and exploiting them may prove to be a coup for the counterinsurgency strategy;

- *Delegitimizing* the insurgent movement in the eyes of the local population and any international constituency it might have;

- *Demoralizing* the insurgent movement by creating and sustaining the perception that long-term trends are adverse and by making the lives of insurgents unpleasant and dangerous through military pressure and psychological operations;

- *Delinking* the insurgent movement from its internal and external support by understanding and destroying the political, logistics, and financial connections; and,

- *Deresourcing* the insurgent movement both by curtailing funding streams and causing it to waste existing resources.

Each of these effects would require specific metrics. In combination, these would allow counterinsurgent commanders to assess success or failure and make adjustments. Since the essence of insurgency is psychological, metrics in this realm, while difficult to develop and assess, are more accurate than body counts, insurgent operations undertaken, development projects begun (or finished), and similar measures. They might include things such as the percentage of local residents who feel secure enough to go out at night, express a pro government political position, or work for the government, or the percentage of people with favorable attitudes toward the government versus toward the insurgents. In addition, metrics should focus heavily on the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the partner government and security forces.

The notion of recognizing and reacting to failure is an important one. As John Nagl points out, one of the things that allowed the British army to innovate and adapt during its counterinsurgency operations in Malaya in the 1950s (and thus attain success) was its willingness at all levels to admit failure.[32] To make this work requires an independent strategic assessment organization. Those whose careers are contingent on the success of a campaign can never evaluate it with brutal objectivity. Yet counterinsurgency demands brutal honesty. Making an organization or even its higher headquarters responsible for self-evaluation is to risk the kind of fantasy assessments, delusional optimism, and inflated reporting seen in Vietnam. The auditors should include experienced government officials, military officers, policemen, intelligence officers, strategists, and regional

experts. The organization should be nonpartisan, interagency and, if possible, multinational.

Another way of thinking about structuring an operation (and one that is compatible with the effects-based approach) is to use *preemption/prevention* as a guideline. Certain adverse things can happen during the course of an insurgency: 1) the emergence of a serious insurgency in the first place; 2) the development of military capabilities by the insurgents which pose a threat to the regime; 3) the expansion of public support for the insurgents to the point that the legitimacy of the regime is challenged; 4) the creation of linkages between the insurgency and organized crime, or the entry into organized crime by the insurgency itself; 5) development of the ability to sustain a level of chronic instability by the insurgents; 6) a widespread perception that ultimately the insurgents will prevail; and, 7) the coalescence of a coherent insurgent political organization.

An effective counterinsurgency plan would be one explicitly designed to preempt and prevent these adverse trends. Each activity would blend both defensive and offensive actions. Each would require a range of resources and actions; each could be evaluated by separate metrics (again measured and evaluated by a small, responsible strategic assessment organization which focuses on actionable information rather than bureaucratic procedures.)

Counterinsurgent planners should always remember that timing matters. As with health care, a small effort early is more effective than a major one later on. While it is difficult to discern, insurgencies do have a point of "critical mass" where they become much more formidable opponents. If the United States is able to help a threatened partner augment its military, psychological, and political capability rapidly and early, it may be able to prevent the insurgents from attaining critical mass. In general, U.S. intervention for counterinsurgency support is most likely to succeed at an acceptable cost before an insurgency reaches critical mass (however hard that may be to identify). U.S. involvement after an insurgency as reached the "point of no return" where it cannot be defeated at a reasonable cost is likely to be ineffective. If an insurgency reaches this point, the United States should pursue disengagement even given the strategic and political costs.

The military component of a counterinsurgency campaign must seize the initiative as quickly as possible. There are multiple ways of doing this. When an insurgent movement elects to make

a major stand in the military battlespace and depends on internal sanctuary, conventional sweeps and offensives play an important role. But history suggests that "fighting fire with fire"—emulating insurgent tactics—is also important. The counterinsurgents, for instance, can develop combined guerrilla forces comprised of U.S. or other outside Special Forces and host nation personnel. Creating a second front for the insurgents severely weakens their ability to wage an effective insurgency since the allied guerrillas launch raids on their logistical bases and headquarters as well as interdicting lines of communication. The French and British used allied guerrillas to great effect in Indochina and Malaya respectively. Even though the program began late in the Indochina war (1953), French guerrillas tied down a number of Vietminh battalions by raiding bases, striking at headquarters units, and interdicting lines of communication.[33] They even operated in China, much to the consternation of the Chinese. The British in Malaya also raised guerrilla forces operating in the same manner. Moreover, the British raised guerrilla units comprised of former insurgents to bolster the counterinsurgent effort. Similarly, American Special Forces also formed guerrilla units during Vietnam. Logically, allied guerrilla operations force the insurgents to devote critical resources and manpower to defensive measures. Given that insurgent capabilities are weak to begin with, such an allied capability can quash an insurgency early on.

In a national insurgency with its triangular configuration, the war of ideas plays a critical role. Hence information operations cannot be conducted in an ad hoc manner. The insurgents always have an initial advantage in this regard, and only a sophisticated information operations campaign will wrest the initiative from them. The host nation government must control this process fully; the United States will never have a sophisticated enough understanding of key cultural and historical elements to run a program on its own. The American role is to provide support. In a liberation insurgency, the United States is at a distinct disadvantage in the information campaign. Almost no U.S. actions or information themes are likely to change the core dynamic of the conflict: that Americans are seen as outsiders and the insurgents as insiders. This does not mean that the United States should abandon the information campaign, but American strategists and leaders must be aware of its limitations and not expect to "win" the "war of ideas" on their own.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND FORCE STRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The history of counterinsurgency shows that the full integration of all government agencies under unified control (and preferably unified command) is the only way to synchronize the elements of national power effectively. This is considered one of the reasons for British success in Malaya and for the lack of French and American success in Indochina.[34] History also suggests that intelligence and, equally important, counterintelligence, is central to success in counterinsurgency. Insurgencies pose particular intelligence challenges, so intelligence must be all-source, focused, and disseminated to the various organizations involved in the counterinsurgency effort. The seamless integration of law enforcement and military action is equally important. Police capability has always been vital to destroy insurgent political undergrounds but is becoming even more so as insurgency mutates. Today effective, preferably multinational law enforcement support is vital to limit insurgent access to resources whether through direct criminal activity or ties to global organized crime.

One of the most important elements in counterinsurgency support is selecting the right person to lead it. In most cases, insurgency warfare necessitates a law enforcement response, so a security czar, preferably a former police commissioner, should exercise unified command. This appointment accomplishes two objectives. First, it signifies the primacy of a political solution vice a parochial military solution. Second, it appoints a credentialed official with experience in domestic security issues and able to integrate rapidly all agencies towards a unified counterinsurgency campaign. Equally important, the leader of counterinsurgency support must be a skilled strategist, able to integrate elements of power and take a long-term perspective. His staff must be more than military, including police, experts on economic and political development, psychologists, cultural anthropologists, and mass communications specialists.

Because insurgency is an "armed theater" where the antagonists are playing to an audience at the same time they interact with each other, it is sometimes suggested that a specific organization is needed to control information activities. This many not be the most effective solution. A better idea is to create an organizational culture

where every component of the government is aware of the centrality of information, the need to tailor images and messages, and the importance of developing strategies, operations, and tactical plans based on desired psychological and political effects.

The package for counterinsurgency support provided by the United States will depend on whether the operation entails supporting a threatened partner state or is a component of post-intervention stabilization and transformation. When involved in backing an existing government, the U.S. force package would be predominately designed for training, advice, and support. In most cases, the only combat forces would be those needed for force and facility protection, more rarely for strike missions in particularly challenging environments. Modularity should increasingly allow the Army to tailor, deploy, and sustain such packages. It would be a mistake, though, to think strictly in terms of Army or even military force packages. When the United States undertakes counterinsurgency support, it should build an interagency force package from the beginning.

The relationship of the U.S. force and the supported government is always a major consideration. Intelligence sharing particularly is complicated since the United States will often have no way of assessing whether the supported government counterintelligence procedures are adequate. For actionable intelligence, it is more effective to rely on police forces to gather intelligence through investigations, interviews, and interrogations with the inhabitants than to rely solely on technical means. In a counterinsurgency, human intelligence is often more timely and accurate, yet the military, particularly an outside military offering counterinsurgency support, faces tremendous obstacles in building and sustaining the personal relationships which fuel human intelligence.

Sustaining the commitment is an important part of force packaging. Successful counterinsurgency takes many years, often a decade or more. Consideration must be given to rotation procedures for deployed forces. This strikes directly against one of the primary conundrums in counterinsurgency: history has shown over and over that short-term deployments are ineffective in counterinsurgency since units and individuals are not able to develop adequate situational awareness and local knowledge, yet in the contemporary U.S. military, it is difficult to sustain long-term deployments in

hardship locations. To some extent, contractors can relieve this pressure, particularly since many of the training, advice, and support functions in counterinsurgency do not have to be performed by uniformed military.

As Iraq and Afghanistan have shown, the use of contractors brings a range of other problems associated with training, control, discipline, and protection. In a politically charged environment, missteps by contractors can be just as damaging as mistakes by uniformed military.

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

Given the likelihood of continued involvement in counter-insurgency support, the Army will need to increase the number of units such as Intelligence and Engineers that have particular utility in this environment. As the Army continues transformation, it is likely that other types of units can be redesigned into these. Special Forces also have immense utility in counterinsurgency but should focus less on training of partner militaries. This is a vital task but can be done more efficiently by other, more numerous units, perhaps Reserve Component or contractors. Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations, both of which also have high utility in counterinsurgency support, need refocusing and restructuring. At a minimum, a larger proportion of these units should be in the Active Component. And both need greater autonomy to be effective in a counterinsurgency environment rather than being assigned to the commander of a maneuver unit.

Counterinsurgency related to stabilization and transformation operations can pose even greater force development challenges than support to a functioning government. A stabilization operation can require the significant deployment of forces for extended periods. One idea under consideration within the Department of Defense (DoD), for instance, is that the United States should have the capacity to deploy a force of up to 200,000 for up to 5 years and train a local military of up to 100,000 within 6 months.[35] This U.S. force

may include large numbers of combat units and Military Police, in addition to the other specialized units. The challenge, then, is one of sustaining the commitment and developing a rotation base.

In general, though, the Army should not develop specialized units to "fight" counterinsurgency. As U.S. doctrine and strategy indicate, the primary role of the United States in counterinsurgency is strengthening and supporting partners. U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency combat should always be seen as an emergency expedient, undertaken only when absolutely necessary for the shortest period of time possible. Given this, it would not be an effective use of resources to create specialized units for counterinsurgency combat. If direct combat is required for some finite period of time, the tactical activities would be close enough to those already resident in the force that the training of existing units can be modified to make them effective.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

One can debate whether insurgents are otherwise ethical people forced to do evil things by desperation and weakness, or whether evil people are inherently drawn to insurgency. Clearly, though, this type of conflict is characterized by depravations of the most terrible type. Insurgents often make deliberate use of ethical asymmetry, undertaking actions that the regime cannot or will not. Or they draw the counterinsurgents into abuses only to use this as psychological ammunition. Regime after regime fighting determined insurgents has found that the most effective methods, sometimes the only effective methods, violate human and civil rights. Beleaguered governments must often choose between sinking to the ethical level of the insurgents or defeat. While some regimes can undertake this—witness the brutal counterinsurgency campaigns in places like Chechnya, Guatemala, and Peru—at other times, it can lead to the downfall of a government which is responsive to domestic or international pressure, whether the French Fourth Republic fighting Algerian insurgents or Slobodan Milosevic's Serbian regime undertaking counterinsurgency in Kosovo. Because of this, leader development and training for counterinsurgency must emphasize ethical considerations and force discipline. While these are certainly integral to all forms of

leader development and training, in the counterinsurgency context, where insurgents are completely intermixed with noncombatants, intelligence is heavily human, crime and warfare intermingle, every action has immense psychological and political implications. This not only adds additional stress on soldiers and leaders, but also confronts them with a different array of challenges.

To successfully adopt matrix and networked organizations at the tactical and operational levels, leader development must focus on good decisionmaking, confidence, and creativity among lower ranking leaders, both commissioned and noncommissioned. Leader development and training must include increased cultural sensitivity and the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. It must focus on inculcating the Army with the ability to innovate and adapt. Every insurgency is so different that overarching concepts and doctrine must be tailored to specific situations and cultures. That can only be done by an innovative and adaptable force. Empowering and entrusting junior leaders to find durable solutions in their unique environments is the only effective way to combat dynamic insurgents. As John Nagl points out, the ability to innovate and adapt was one of the primary reasons the British were more successful at counterinsurgency in Malaya than the American Army was in Vietnam. This same truth still holds: the future belongs to the adaptable. The Army's experience in Iraq during 2003-04 suggests that it does have significant capability for innovation and adaptation, particularly at the junior levels.[36] Most of this has taken place through informal methods of communication and networking rather than through formal procedures. Extensive work is needed to further analyze this and develop methods to see that it applies at the operational and strategic levels as well as the tactical.

Given the nature of counterinsurgency, professional education and training increasingly must be interagency and multinational. The interagency aspect is particularly important. Unless the Army learns with and trains with other agencies (to include ethical training), it cannot operate seamlessly in the high pressure, violent, ambiguous world of counterinsurgency. Leaders at all levels must understand and trust the capabilities of other agencies; otherwise they will never venture from the approved military solution.

THE WAY AHEAD

Little time has passed between the end of the last insurgency era and the beginning of the current one. That is both a blessing and a curse. Many senior Army leaders and retired officers working as DoD civilians or contractors have counterinsurgency expertise and experience. The problem is that the type of insurgency that these experts best understand—Maoist People's War—is not the same as the 21st century insurgency we have seen so far. Many ideas and concepts central to their understanding of counterinsurgency such as, for instance, the notion that victory comes from winning the "hearts and minds" of "the people" is actually specific to one particular variant of insurgency and counterinsurgency. How should the strategy and operational methods used for national insurgency differ from those applied in liberation insurgency? One of the key challenges today, then, is distinguishing the universal themes and concepts from the context specific ones, and jettisoning those which no longer apply. This process has only begun.

In the realm of strategy, the United States must build regional structures to identify incipient insurgencies, deter or prevent them, and develop regional support systems when they do break out. The idea that the United States will be responsible for counterinsurgency support around the world is not sustainable. Other nations have experience, capability, and the incentive to prevent insurgency from destabilizing their regions. The United States should inspire them to act on this.

The notion of a grand strategy modeled on counterinsurgency to confront the global insurgency also needs further development. As the Service most experienced in the analysis of insurgency, the Army should play a leading role in this. But the U.S. military, and particularly the Army, were so disillusioned by Vietnam that it has since kept insurgency and counterinsurgency at arm's length. When it could not be avoided, it was folded into, even hidden, in other concepts such as low intensity conflict, Foreign Internal Defense, and now stability operations and support operations. Given the centrality of insurgency and counterinsurgency in the contemporary strategic environment, the Army must transcend this hesitancy and accord these forms of conflict the priority they merit in strategy, operational thinking, doctrine, concept development, and force development.

Given the importance of the psychological and political battlespaces in insurgency and counterinsurgency, the Army must integrate psychological concepts and analysis in its strategic and operational planning. This kind of integration will require adding trained psychologists and cultural experts at many planning levels (as well as in the professional military education and wargaming systems). The Army also needs better concepts and, eventually, doctrine to understand the linkage of insurgency and organized crime. This would certainly need to be Joint doctrine and may need to be interagency.

To instigate such changes, the Army can be an advocate and locomotive in the Joint and interagency arenas. The interagency dimension is crucial: the U.S. Army may become the most proficient army in the world at counterinsurgency, but if the rest of the government does not develop equal capabilities, the United States will not be effective. And the Army can use its powerful educational, wargaming, and concept development capabilities to generate needed changes within the Army. It will require both of these devices to meet (and transcend) the challenges of the new insurgency era.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ARMY

- Revise the understanding of insurgency which serves as a basis for U.S. strategy and doctrine to include the distinction between national and liberation movements.
- Develop, refine, and wargame appropriate strategy and doctrine for each type.
- Institutionalize methods for unified interagency approaches to counterinsurgency support.
- Act as the advocate for holistic capability enhancement across the government.
- Develop and exercise interagency techniques to build effective security and intelligence forces rapidly in a failed or occupied state.
- Develop an effects-based method of counterinsurgency planning; test this through robust experimentation, analysis, and wargaming.

- Develop a small, independent strategic assessment agency to evaluate U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency support.
- Continue refining and implementing plans to increase Army units with particular utility in counterinsurgency such as Intelligence and Engineers, and to reconfigure and, if necessary, augment Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations units.
- Undertake strategic capacity-building by coordination with regional security organizations and states.
- Integrate the Department of Homeland Security into strategic planning for counterinsurgency support.
- Refine leader development and training to include emphasis on understanding and responding to 21st century insurgency.

ENDNOTES

1. These are not mutually exclusive, and an insurgency can take on dimensions of both, or shift from one to the other over its course.

2. The British success at quelling the Malayan insurgency of the 1950s and 1960s sometimes is held to offer a model of successful counterinsurgency in a liberation framework, but its applicability is limited. The Malayan insurgency was limited to the Chinese minority of that territory and never spread to the Malay majority. If it had, the British strategy, which was based on precise, limited uses of military force and a stress on police actions and political and economic reforms, would have had less utility. In addition, one of the major factors which made the counterinsurgency campaign successful and prevented the insurgency from spreading to the ethnic Malay population was a promise by Britain that it would withdraw once the situation was stabilized. In other words, the British had to surrender their role as occupier to defeat the insurgents. For discussions of this conflict, see Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966; Robert W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1972; Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dog: Malaya 1948-1960*, London: Fontana, 1973; Richard L. Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya 1948-1960*, London: Cassell, 1966; and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.

3. The foco strategy developed by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro placed great stress on this. See Ernesto Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

4. Quoted in Ahmed Janabi, "Of Homeland, Identity and Occupation," *Aljazeera.net*, September 9, 2004, published at *http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/239DF360-3640-457C-BA99-5FD497547598.htm.*

5. Underground political organization did not stop once armed conflict began but continued through the duration of the campaign in areas controlled by the government.

6. Martin van Creveld argued that this tendency for nuclear weapons to obviate large scale conventional warfare would continue, thus making low-intensity conflict the dominant form around the world. See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York: Free Press, 1991.

7. For example, Andrew Molnar, *et. al., Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, Washington, DC: Special Operations Research Office of the American University, 1965, reprinted, Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001, provided an amazingly accurate description of the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese strategy. A good description of Dau Tranh can be found at *http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-14725.html*.

8. Quoted in Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, New York: William Morrow, 1994, p. 724.

9. On CORDS, see Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1986, pp. 118-121. Ambassador Komer was director of the CORDS program.

10. The classic early work on the organization and strategy of the Viet Cong is Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Technique of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965. Also important is Pike's classic *PAVN: Peoples Army of Vietnam*, Novato, CA: Presidio, 1986. On Tet, see Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!: The Turning Point in the Vietnam War*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. On the Phoenix Program, see Douglas Valentine, *The Phoenix Program*, New York: Harpercollins, 1990; and Mark Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey : The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997.

11. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, January 1988, p. 34.

12. Probably the only traditional Maoist insurgency that has a chance of outright victory is the one in Nepal. See Thomas A. Marks, I*nsurgency in Nepal*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2003.

13. 20th century urban-focused insurgent strategies such as the one associated with Carlos Marighella were not nearly as successful as the rural approach developed by Mao.

14. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, September 2002, p. 9.

15. *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.

16. *National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, 2004, pp. 2-3.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

20. Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, June 1995, p. III-9.

21. *Ibid.*, p. III-10.

22. Joint Publication 3-07.1, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, April 2004, p. I-1.

23. Joint Publication 3-07, p. III-3.

24. Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, February 2003, p. 1-8.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

26. *Ibid*, p. 3-6.

27. Keith J. Costa, "Army Crafting Field Manual For Counterinsurgency Operations," *Inside The Pentagon*, August 26, 2004, p. 1. The interim doctrine is Field Manual Interim (FMI), 3-07.22, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, October 2004.

28. FMI 3-07.22, p. 1-1.

29. *Ibid*.

30. Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America*, Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2002, pp. 205-207 and ff.

31. See *Small Wars: 21st Century* (draft), Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 2004, pp. 13-14.

32. John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002, p. 192.

33. Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy*, Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1964, pp. 268-271, 274.

34. See Geoffrey D. T. Shaw, "Policemen versus Soldiers, the Debate Leading to MAAG Objections and Washington Rejections of the Core of British Counter-Insurgency Advice," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 12, No, 2, Summer 2001, pp. 51-78.

35. Thomas E. Ricks, "Shift From Traditional War Seen At Pentagon," *Washington Post*, September 3, 2004, p. 1.

36. Leonard Wong, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2004.

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