

## New rules for new enemies

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"We put an Army on the battlefield that I had been a part of for 37 years. It doesn't have any doctrine, nor was it educated and trained, to deal with an insurgency. ... After the Vietnam War, we purged ourselves of everything that had to do with irregular warfare or insurgency, because it had to do with how we lost that war. In hindsight, that was a bad decision. ... We have responsibility."

— Gen. Jack Keene, former Army vice chief of staff

Events over the last two decades demonstrate that insurgency and terrorism are the most likely and most dangerous threats our country will face for the foreseeable future. Our enemies have studied our strengths and weaknesses and adapted their tactics to inflict the maximum harm on our society. Those who have faced the U.S. in conventional, interstate combat — Grenada, Panama, Afghanistan under the Taliban and Iraq under Saddam — suffered defeat in days or weeks. However, those who fight the U.S. employing insurgent tactics — Vietnam, Lebanon, Somalia and the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq — have fared far better.

The stark contrast between the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the war in Iraq demonstrate this dichotomy clearly. In 1991, we destroyed the world's fourth-largest army in 100 hours of ground combat. We have spent three years, thousands of lives and billions of dollars to stabilize Iraq, yet our insurgent enemies remain a dangerous and capable force. A thinking enemy is far more likely to attempt to exhaust our political will through protracted insurgency than to defeat our military through conventional combat. Insurgent tactics negate our asymmetric advantages in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and precision fires by using civilians as cover and concealment, and media as strategic fires. By hiding in plain sight among innocent civilians, insurgents maintain their freedom to maneuver. Insurgents rarely mass or defend terrain. Instead, they seek to discredit and demoralize free societies and societies that aspire to freedom by terrorizing civilians.

Insurgent tactics are appealing to both nonstate actors and to states wishing to harm the U.S. Nonstate actors and weak states wishing to harm our country have little choice but to adopt insurgent tactics. These groups lack the means to generate conventional combat power. However, even states with the resources to generate conventional combat power find insurgent tactics effective. Great-power wars are costly, risky and are prone to escalation. When one or more of the great powers possesses nuclear weapons, the dangers of direct conventional combat are potentially catastrophic. To avoid the stalemate created by nuclear deterrence, great powers turn to proxies employing insurgent tactics. For those wishing to harm America, insurgent tactics are far safer and more effective than facing us in conventional combat. During the latter stages of the Cold War, the Soviet Union avoided direct military confrontation with the U.S., preferring instead to sponsor anti-American insurgencies in Vietnam, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The U.S. later employed similar tactics, supporting insurgencies against Soviet clients in Afghanistan, Angola, Nicaragua and elsewhere. Today, there is growing evidence that Iran is supporting anti-American elements in Iraq.

Although insurgents and terrorists operate in small cells, they are capable of inflicting great harm. The greatest national security threat facing the U.S. is not a conventional attack by a foreign military power, but rather a terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction. On Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaida murdered nearly 3,000 Americans by turning civilian airliners into weapons. Had these terrorists procured weapons of mass destruction, the death toll would have been greater. Moreover, there is a clear link between insurgency abroad and terrorism on American soil. Terrorist groups such as al-Qaida seek to create rogue regimes such as the Taliban in

Afghanistan or failed states such as Somalia and Iraq. In these ungoverned spaces around the globe, terrorists generate combat power for use against the U.S. and other free societies. Because free societies rely on the relatively free movement of people and goods across and within national boundaries, it is cost prohibitive to defend every vulnerable point. The best way to prevent terrorism at home is to deny terrorists the sanctuary they seek in rogue and failed states around the globe.

## **NUCLEAR POWER**

For the foreseeable future, the least likely form of combat our forces will face is conventional interstate combat with a major military power. Major military powers have nuclear weapons — indeed the possession of nuclear weapons is one of the defining characteristics of a major power. China, Russia, India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, and North Korea and Iran are determined to acquire them at any cost. For major powers seeking to oppose the U.S., nuclear weapons have an irresistible appeal. A secure nuclear capability, however small, is sufficient to deter conventional attack by the U.S. Simply put, nuclear weapons make their possessors virtually invulnerable to invasion and regime change. Were the U.S. to invade a state with a secure nuclear capability, we could neither deter nor prevent that state from turning its nuclear arsenal on our forces, our allies or our homeland. A nuclear-armed regime facing a conventional invasion has little to lose and every incentive to go down fighting. The U.S. understands this point; we have never attacked a nuclear power and we spend a great deal of energy attempting to prevent nuclear proliferation. Our potential adversaries understand this point as well and have either acquired or soon will acquire a nuclear deterrent. When confronting a nuclear-armed enemy, the U.S. may opt for diplomacy or covert action. However, unless science or tactics solve the standoff created by nuclear deterrence, conventional war among nuclear powers is implausible.

When the U.S. engages in major combat operations in the future, our most likely adversaries are weak states and nonstate actors. Weak states (e.g. Grenada 1982, Panama 1989, Haiti 1994, Afghanistan 2001, Iraq 2003) by definition possess neither a nuclear deterrent nor the conventional forces to resist the U.S. for a prolonged period of time. In these situations, the conventional might of American power quickly destroys the enemy's capacity for organized resistance, and U.S. forces quickly transition to stability operations. A far more likely scenario for major combat operations, or MCO, occurs when nonstate actors such as terrorists or insurgents choose to mass forces and defend terrain. This scenario has occurred several times in Iraq, including Fallujah (2004), Najaf (2004) and Tal Afar (2004 and 2005). When our enemies commit the blunder of massing and defending terrain, Army and Marine Corps forces seize the opportunity to destroy them. Such MCOs are limited in time and space and quickly return to counterinsurgency (COIN) operations once we destroy the enemy's capacity to hold ground.

## **ADAPTIVE CULTURE**

"Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, training, organizations, education, exercises, material, leadership, personnel, facilities and planning." — Defense Department Directive 3000.05

Across the Defense Department and within the Army and Marine Corps in particular, leaders are transforming America's military to win the Long War. These efforts are necessarily comprehensive in nature. We cannot defeat our adaptive enemies merely by developing tactics or building new weapons systems. Given the pace at which our enemies are able to adapt, any one-dimensional solution will be obsolete by the time it reaches forces in the field. To win the Long War, the Army must change its culture to one that demands and rewards adaptation. This cultural change will serve as the catalyst for a comprehensive redesign of doctrine, organizations, training, leader education, material development and soldier recruitment.

To win the Long War, the Army must develop a more adaptive organizational culture. To create such a culture, the Army must change its focus from a centralized, specialized focus on major conventional wars to a more decentralized and less specialized focus on full-spectrum operations.

This shift in organizational culture cannot occur within existing organizations — indeed these organizations can be an impediment to change. The best way to change the organizational culture of the Army is to change the pathways for professional advancement within the officer corps. The Army will become more adaptive only when being adaptive offers the surest path to promotion.

To create a culture of innovation within the Army, we must develop a new pathway to success that is not beholden to any branch. The old bromide is true — give a man a hammer and he sees every problem as a nail. Human beings understand problems in the context of the tools available to solve them. A culture that fosters innovation is one that develops leaders who are equally comfortable applying the elements of combat power and the specialized capabilities of the various branches. Furthermore, the development of this generalized expertise must be rewarded through promotion and command selection — the surest means the Army has to communicate which skills, knowledge and abilities it prizes most highly.

Toward that end, the Army should consider abolishing branch distinctions among field-grade officers for most within the operational career field. Under the current model, an officer remains in his basic branch until he retires or is promoted to the rank of general officer. This lifelong branch affiliation narrows an officer's perspective and limits his familiarity with capabilities outside his branch. The new model for career advancement should terminate branch affiliation for most officers in the operational career field at the rank of captain. A captain who commands with distinction within his basic branch should have the opportunity to command again in another branch. Officers who command successfully in two organizations from two different branches — maneuver and logistics, fires and intelligence, etc. — are those most suited to command battalions and brigades. The pathway to high command should be reserved for officers who demonstrate a facility with a variety of tools, both lethal and nonlethal. While there would still be a significant need for specialized officers, the surest pathway to high command ought to lie open to the adaptive generalist over the narrow specialist.

To win the Long War, the Army must embrace the combined-arms battalion (CAB) as the basic building block for tactical operations and develop a flatter organizational structure. The development of modular brigade combat teams is a step in the right direction but does not go far enough. The current organization is too hierarchical and too specialized to operate most effectively in the Long War.

During the Plains Indian Wars, many of the tribes opposing America's westward expansion adopted decentralized hit-and-run tactics to terrorize settlers. In response to these threats, the U.S. Cavalry abandoned the large-scale tactics of the Civil War in favor of small-unit operations. Cavalry troops and squadrons conducted area security operations to protect settlers dispersed over wide areas of the frontier. Cavalry squadrons were combined-arms formations that contained intelligence collectors and cultural advisers (then called scouts) as well as maneuver forces and an organic indirect fires capability. This decentralized approach was necessary to ensure that these organizations possessed the tools they needed to bring security to the frontier.

Emulating our cavalry ancestors, the Army must embrace the combined-arms battalion as the basic building block for tactical operations. When a company or platoon goes on patrol in Iraq or Afghanistan, it must be prepared to operate across the spectrum of conflict. Small units must be equally prepared to conduct offense, defense and stability operations. Small-unit leaders will often be responsible for deciding when to transition from one form of operations to another and must have at their immediate disposal the tools necessary to operate across the spectrum of conflict. Battalions and brigades must be self-contained combined-arms formations with every necessary capability resident within them — intelligence, information operations, maneuver, fires, combat service support, assured mobility, command and control, etc. These tools include maneuver, intelligence, civil affairs, information operations, assured mobility, fire support and combat service support. The CAB must have these tools as organic components of its combat power to build the cohesion and confidence necessary for effective small-unit operations. Some of these capabilities may be organic to companies with the CAB, while others could be task-organized depending on the mission at hand.

Furthermore, the CAB must adopt a wider span of control than current Army formations to enable decentralized operations. Our doctrine accepts the need for decentralized organizations operating under mission-type orders. Such decentralization enables small-unit leaders to seize the initiative by taking action guided only by the commander's intent. The organizational complement to this doctrine is a combined-arms battalion with five or more combined-arms companies and organic enablers from other battlefield operating systems. Such an organization does not merely permit decentralization, it demands it. A combined-arms battalion commander controlling at least five subordinate companies and other enablers cannot issue detailed instructions for every imaginable contingency. He is constrained by necessity to control operations by providing an overall intent and developing leaders and organizations capable of acting decisively to achieve that intent. Brigade combat teams and divisions should follow suit, expanding their span of control to become flatter and faster.

In addition to being too hierarchical, the Army's organizations are too specialized. The Army's organizational design retains many critical functions, including intelligence analysis and civil affairs operations, at echelons brigade and above. Many battalion commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan have recognized the insufficiency of their organizations in these areas and have developed "out of hide" solutions. Rather than permit individual commanders to solve these problems in isolation, the Army should embrace an organizational design that resources the needs commanders have identified. There are some training and readiness inefficiencies associated with decentralized organizations. However, these peacetime inefficiencies are a small price to pay to increase the effectiveness of small units in combat.

To win the Long War, the Army must continue to shift its training focus more toward COIN and less toward MCO. The Army has taken significant strides in making its training strategy more relevant to our enemies' most likely tactics — insurgency and terrorism. However, there is much more to be done in the areas of cultural awareness, intelligence collection and analysis, combined operations and civil-military operations. These areas must receive a greater share of the Army's training resources, which will necessarily lead to a corresponding decrease in the resources devoted to MCO. While preparing for COIN as the most likely threat, the Army must retain the capability to conduct MCO when required to do so. Units that can succeed in COIN are inherently capable of succeeding in MCO, although the opposite is not true; this is why COIN has correctly been called "the graduate level of warfare."

More so than any other aspect of preparedness, the Army is succeeding in adapting training to COIN. Not surprisingly, our adaptation to COIN began at the lowest echelons of the Army and is working its way to the top. As early as late 2003, individuals and small units deploying to Iraq recognized the need to prepare for COIN. Battalion and company commanders designed training exercises to replicate conditions their soldiers would face in Iraq. These small-unit adaptations were soon incorporated into brigade-level mission-rehearsal exercises and combat training center rotations. Somewhat belatedly, institutional training within the Army began to shift the focus away from MCO toward COIN. By 2006, most branches redesigned their officer and noncommissioned officer training courses to include more COIN scenarios. The COIN academies in Taji, Iraq, and Fort Leavenworth, Kan., now transmit lessons learned to units deploying to Iraq. Moreover, information technology has enabled units in battle to pass on lessons learned to units preparing for deployment. These informal and formal feedback mechanisms have ensured that pre-deployment training is tough and realistic.

While we should celebrate these successes, there is more to be done. Language proficiency and cultural awareness in tactical units are insufficient. Effective COIN requires interaction with the host-nation civilian population, and the greatest barriers to such interaction are language and culture. Every unit that operates independently in a COIN environment — maneuver platoons, civil affairs and psychological operations teams, etc. — must have at least one member who is proficient in the local language and knowledgeable in the local culture. Collecting, analyzing, disseminating and acting on intelligence are critical skills in COIN that require substantial training and resources to develop. These tasks are not limited to intelligence soldiers; in COIN, understanding the environment and finding the enemy are everybody's business. Insurgencies are defeated not by foreign powers but by indigenous forces. Developing host-nation security

forces, to include organizing, training, equipping and employing these forces in combined operations, is an essential task for effective COIN. Replicating host-nation forces in pre-deployment training is difficult and resource intensive, but absolutely necessary to prepare units for success in combat. Finally, redressing popular grievances regarding essential services and building host-nation government capacity require extensive training down to the maneuver platoon level. Like intelligence collection, civil-military operations are everybody's business.

The tasks described above are essential but under-resourced. Too great a share of the Army's training resources is devoted to major combat operations. While armor and field artillery units fire far less than one round per cannon per day in Iraq, most combat-arms units interact with Iraqi civilians every day. Despite these realities, pre-deployment training contains a great deal of gunnery and precious little language training. The allocation of training time in preparation for a deployment is a zero-sum game; it is impossible to add something without taking something away. In recognition of this reality, the Army should require gunnery qualification on its major combat systems only once per year. The additional training time and money made available by this change should be devoted to tasks essential for COIN — language and culture proficiency, intelligence collection and analysis, interagency and information operations and civil-affairs tasks. Leaders must understand that sending troops to war without language proficiency or cultural understanding is as great a leadership failure as sending them to war without qualifying them on their weapons systems.

While the Army must redress the imbalance between MCO and COIN training, we must not allow our MCO capability to atrophy. Our capability to dominate the upper end of the spectrum is the asymmetric advantage that forces our enemies to adopt the long and dangerous path of insurgency. Maintaining our MCO capability limits our enemies' options to escalate conflicts while preserving our own ability to do so. Even in COIN environments, there are requirements to conduct major combat operations. These MCO opportunities are inversely proportional to the size of the friendly formation. Almost every platoon deploying to a COIN environment will face an enemy force willing and able to hold ground, attack and counterattack for limited periods of time. Some companies and a few battalions will face such a foe. It is very unlikely that many brigades will conduct major combat operations will all or most of their combat power and it is unprecedented for divisions and corps to do so. In seeking the balance between MCO and COIN, units must keep this principle in mind. Small units, far more so than large ones, must be prepared to escalate to MCO when the opportunity to do so presents itself.

### **EDUCATING LEADERS**

To win the Long War, the Army must educate leaders to think critically and comprehensively regarding the application of all elements of national power. Destroying our enemies' capacity for organized resistance is necessary but not sufficient to deny terrorists and insurgents the permissive conditions they require to sow instability. To eliminate or prevent the emergence of terrorist sanctuaries, Army leaders must possess the intellectual tools necessary to foster host-nation political and economic development. The development of capable and credible political and economic institutions denies terrorists the ungoverned spaces they need to thrive. Such development can be fostered only by highly educated leaders. Some look elsewhere in the Executive Branch for this expertise, and there are efforts underway to improve both capacity and capability for stabilization and reconstruction tasks in the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development; however, it is our soldiers who will pay the price if we count on others to perform these essential tasks that only the Army has the resources to implement.

COIN is graduate-level warfare practiced at the lowest echelons of command. Small units are often responsible for fostering political development and economic reconstruction within their areas of operation. These tasks are essential for effective counterinsurgency. Building effective political and economic institutions denies insurgents support from the population, making them easy prey for security forces. However, the typical company commander has neither the professional education nor the language skills necessary to accomplish these tasks. While there are many gifted amateurs in our formations performing heroically, the Army cannot rely on improvisation for mission-essential tasks. Company-level commanders ought to have undergraduate-level education in economics and politics and language training prior to

commanding in a COIN environment. Field-grade officers require more advanced training in these disciplines and skills, as their challenges in COIN are correspondingly more difficult. The education of noncommissioned officers must change as well. NCOs must receive language training comparable to that of officers, as our sergeants are most often those in direct contact with civilian populations and host-nation security forces. NCOs ought to have at least some undergraduate-level education in relevant disciplines to complement and keep pace with the efforts of their officers.

Increased leader education would not only provide operational advantages but would also enhance recruitment and retention. The burdens of the Long War fall hardest on small-unit leaders. Repetitive combat tours threaten to undermine recruitment and retention; a future filled with year-on, year-off combat tours is a bleak one indeed. The Army should offer leaders periodic opportunities for civilian education at key milestones in their careers. Such opportunities would allow leaders to recharge their batteries while acquiring essential skills for future operations.

There are voices within the Defense Department that argue that nation-building is not the proper task of soldiers. Some say these tasks should be left to other U.S. government agencies or nongovernmental agencies such as the United Nations. While the Defense Department is certainly wise to solicit expertise in these agencies, it is unrealistic to expect that such assistance will ever match the requirements of a COIN environment. Employees of other U.S. government agencies and nongovernmental organizations do not operate under terms of compulsory service. They cannot be ordered to risk their lives nor be punished for failing to volunteer to do so. This shortfall in stability and reconstruction expertise is most acutely felt in the immediate aftermath of major combat operations, when the old order is gone and no new order exists to take its place. Insurgency and terrorism grow in this vacuum.

## **RESPECTING HUMAN RIGHTS**

To win the Long War, soldiers must treat non-combatants with respect while at the same time act aggressively and independently to defeat our enemies. Balancing aggressiveness and restraint is certainly stressful and difficult, but it is not impossible for intelligent and disciplined soldiers. Effective counterinsurgency requires security forces to isolate insurgents from the population. To cut off insurgents from the physical and psychological support provided by civilian populations, security forces must earn the respect and trust of the host-nation population. Security forces earn trust and respect when they treat non-combatants with dignity and in accordance with host-nation laws and internationally accepted norms. Such behavior is not only a moral imperative but also an operational necessity. Treating non-combatants with respect increases access to human intelligence, fosters participation in political processes and ethnic/sectarian reconciliation and encourages risk-taking and investment necessary for economic reconstruction.

Indiscriminate attacks against non-combatants and human-rights abuses aid and abet the enemy's cause. In our globalized world, abuses such as prisoner maltreatment in Abu Ghraib are quickly broadcast around the globe. Our enemies use these accounts and images as part of their propaganda campaign to discredit host-nation governments and distort popular perceptions of our intentions. Such propaganda mobilizes those who were previously friendly or at least neutral to our efforts to bring stability and security. Isolated misdeeds by junior soldiers or small units can adversely affect a theater of war, and undo months of hard work and honorable sacrifice.

Demonstrating the restraint necessary for COIN is difficult but not impossible. For many soldiers, the insurgent is indistinguishable from the civilian in appearance, dialect and behavior. Soldiers often cannot tell the difference between an insurgent and a non-combatant until the insurgent attacks. The inability to distinguish between insurgents and non-combatants places enormous stress on soldiers. Surrounded by potential enemies and in constant danger, the soldier is sorely tempted to respond to enemy contact by lashing out indiscriminately. The soldier's dilemma is an acute one: If he does nothing the enemy escapes; if he attacks indiscriminately he risks injuring the innocent.

However, there are proven techniques to enhance the soldier's situational awareness. Close cooperation with host-nation security forces increases the ability of our soldiers to distinguish friend from foe. For most Americans, the difference between the dialect and dress of a Saudi and

an Iraqi is indistinguishable, but for an Iraqi soldier or policemen these differences could not be more obvious. Continuous contact with civilian populations also reduces the risk of harming innocents. Like the beat cop on patrol, the soldier who spends every day in the same neighborhood with the same people develops a street sense. He is quickly able to spot the absence of the ordinary and the presence of the extraordinary. These techniques allow soldiers to respond aggressively to enemy contact while respecting the dignity of the innocent.

### **COSTS, RISKS AND PRIORITIES**

Critics may object that the proposals outlined above — language training, higher education and force-structure redesign — are enormously expensive. These critics are correct.

Counterinsurgency is an intensely human activity and requires significant investment in human capital. Providing continuous security to civilian populations and encouraging political and economic development cannot be done by machines at standoff ranges. There are many opportunities for material solutions to aid soldiers in COIN operations. However, there is no substitute for adaptive, intelligent and disciplined soldiers and leaders operating in close contact with host-nation security forces and the civilian populations they secure. The Long War can be fought only at close range.

Furthermore, the costs of transforming the Army for the Long War pale in comparison to the risks of failing to do so. The U.S. is already fighting active insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. If we fail to bring stability to these states, their territories and populations will soon become instruments for spreading instability throughout the greater Middle East. Fragile governments such as those in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan may fall, endangering global oil supplies and nuclear nonproliferation controls. If we fail to dominate this conflict at the lower end of the spectrum, we may indeed find the need to fight a major theater war to impose stability on a region too vital to ignore. The costs of doing so will be exponentially greater than our current operations.

We have responsibility.

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