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Future Battlespace and the US Response

By

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Introduction

In predicting future threats and problems for the United States I should begin with the bad news. Understanding future trends in conflicts and future threats is not rocket science—which is why we're in deep trouble. As a military we can do rocket science, but it's in basic strategic thinking where we tend to go very wrong.

What we have seen since 9-11 is just how wrong the military and national political leadership can be in predicting and understanding future battlespace. In the 1990s the meaning of the 1991 Gulf War was largely misunderstood and misinterpreted by the US military leadership. After the First Gulf War the accepted lessons learned were: 1. Technology is decisive in war; 2. War is about state on state conflict. It was a very comforting construct—if war is all about technology and the US armed forces are the undoubted matters of technology, then it follows that we would be set to dominate the future.

Of course, there were numerous events at the time that should have forced our military leadership to question the received lessons. The idea that state on state conflict was the norm was quickly refuted by reality. In 1993 we intervened in Somalia and in a battle against Somali factions in Mogadishu later that year we lost 18 Americans. Placed in the middle of a confusing, multi-sided conflict the US Congress and public had little interest in continuing operations against an irregular enemy. A few months later the US forces were withdrawn from the country, leaving the field to the enemy. In 1995 Haiti

imploded, and a US invasion replaced one dictator with another. But the post invasion effort to help stabilize Haiti failed and today that unfortunate island is as poor, violent and unstable as before. All of the US technological advantages could not deal with the actual requirements of Somalia or Haiti.

Through the 1990s the US was also drawn into the internal conflicts of the former Yugoslavia. Beginning in 1995 the US and its European allies intervened to force a peace settlement and begin a peace enforcement operation in Bosnia that shows no sign of ending in my lifetime or my son's lifetime. A few years later the US and NATO again intervened in an internal conflict in the Serbian province of Kosovo and began another open-ended peace enforcement operation to separate and control violent factions.

Yet, even as the US military had to contend with one non-state enemy after another, the study of counterinsurgency and conflict with non-state forces languished. These weren't the kinds of conflicts we liked to fight. By the time we had to deal with insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq the US military was intellectually unprepared, doctrinally unprepared and without an adequate strategy.

In this paper I will first discuss some of reasons why the US military has been unprepared to fight non-conventional wars in the last decade, discuss the likely battlespace that the US military will have to deal with in the next decades and finally discuss some of the means by which we ought to adapt to meet the challenges of future battlespace.

How did we get in such a mess?

One of the major reasons why the US military has had such difficulty in adapting to non-state warfare is the culture of groupthink within the military. This is not something that is particular to the US military, or to our own era, but remains a primary cause of military and strategic failure.

Colonel General Hans von Seeckt, Commander of the German Army from 1920 to 1926 and one of the most influential military thinkers of the twentieth century, wrote about the problem of groupthink in his era. Something had clearly gone wrong for the German General Staff in World War I and they, while tactically and operationally brilliant, had failed badly at strategic thinking. In an essay of the 1920s called “On Buzzwords” (“Slagworte”) Hans von Seeckt pointed out that the tendency of military men to uncritically accept flawed and simplistic theories of war was one of the major dangers of his time, and remained the greatest obstacle to developing sound doctrine and strategy. Seeckt concluded that “Thousands of human lives are sacrificed to military buzzwords—assuredly not from evil intention, but simply from lack of independent thought.”¹

As in Seeckt’s era, we have a strong tendency towards groupthink in the US military tradition. Many of our military leaders make their decision to go to a service academy at seventeen and view the institution of the military as a vocation. This strong emotional connection with the profession has advantages and also disadvantages. Educated in military schools, steeped in the culture of their own service as young officers, there is a strong tendency – especially among bright officers who are eager to advance their careers – to identify completely with their service or even their particular branch of service. This identification with the institution often goes to the point where they will completely internalize the institutional agenda. After a few years the institutional agenda, with all its particular assumptions and cultural traits, becomes the overriding world view of the officer. As von Seeckt noted, officers locked in their worldview have a great deal of trouble thinking beyond it.

We can see examples of how military groupthink pushed American military leaders to poor analysis and to ignore clear trends—all at a very high cost to our forces.

A good example of how groupthink can undermine sound strategic analysis is the reaction of the US military to the lessons of the Spanish Civil War. During the Spanish Civil War from 1936-1936 the latest weapons and techniques of several major military powers (Germany, Russia, Italy) were employed in a large scale conventional war.

Many American officers studied the war in Spain intensely and wrote about the lessons from the major battles in Spain. Most of the American officers who studied and wrote about the Spanish War drew very accurate implications for US doctrine, equipment, and force structure. Some of the predictions made about how the new weapons and tactics demonstrated in Spain might feature in the next major conventional war, which happened to be World War II, were precisely correct.² Indeed, the examination of the Spanish Civil War literature proves that officers who are well trained in their profession can make very accurate predictions of the future by means of a thorough evaluation of recent trends and following those trends to logical conclusions.

However, it is notable that in the articles by a US officer from the period it was said that the higher the author's rank the less accurate were the conclusions about the lessons of the war.³ Indeed, the accuracy of the predictions of future operations and technological developments tend to be directly proportionate to the rank of the officers—with the mid-ranking officers being the most accurate and the high ranking officers being the least.

General Hap Arnold, first chief of staff of the Air Force, is the prime example of getting it wrong. In an editorial to the unofficial journal of the Air Corps, *U.S. Air Services*, published in May 1938—a time when a great deal was known about the military operations in Spain -- Brigadier General Hap Arnold, then Assistant Chief of the Air Corps, dismissed the relevance of the Spanish War operations because they did not feature strategic bombing. Because strategic bombing was the core of Air Corps doctrine, and airpower in Spain had been used primarily in support of ground forces, Arnold believed that there was little that could be learned by the US military.⁴ In contrast, a lowly Coast Artillery major disputed the Air Corps notion that little could be learned from the war in Spain. In an article in his branch journal he noted that there had been a considerable amount of strategic bombing in Spain and that some important conclusions could be drawn. He noted that city bombing had not broken civilian morale, and that bombing had generally been inaccurate and not delivered the effects the airmen had predicted.⁵ This completely accurate analysis struck right at the heart of the Air Corps' doctrine, which emphasized the destruction of small, specific industrial targets

such as power and transformer stations in order to paralyze an opponent and shut down his war industries. Other army officers made further accurate predictions about future operations in army journals. One officer noted the effectiveness of the new German 88mm anti-aircraft gun in Spain. That gun, coupled with the latest monoplane fighters used in Spain, such as the Me 109, most likely meant that the bomber would not necessarily get through enemy defenses in a future conflict.⁶ Unfortunately, the Air Corps steadfastly refused to listen to this analysis until the disastrous Regensburg and Schweinfurt raids of 1943 dramatically demonstrated the vulnerability of the unescorted bomber in the face of modern defenses.

I would not argue that Hap Arnold was dumb. Indeed, Hap Arnold was a brilliant and talented officer and he made an enormous contribution to the development of American airpower. But on the issue of strategic bombing effectiveness he had been locked into the Air Corps ideology for so long that he had internalized the Mitchell/Douhet views as dogma and found himself unable to accept hard data that conflicted with the Air Corps agenda.

In the post-1991 analysis of the lesson of the Gulf War we saw perhaps the high point of groupthink in the modern US military thinking. The first problem was in the broadly held assumption that technology was the decisive factor in warfare. It was commonly asserted in the US military journals and doctrine that the Gulf War signified a "RMA" (Revolution in Military Affairs) and that the RMA was all about technology. One of the most popular definitions of RMA came from the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment which defined a RMA as "...a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations'." Note that the Pentagon's definition of RMA emphasized technology as the driving force for change.

Indeed, the most widely-held view in the US military in the 1990s was the belief that technology had revolutionized warfare. One of the most surprising assertions made by

many senior leaders is that technology would eliminate the fog and friction of war from the future battlespace.⁷ In the mid-1990s, in the full rush of enthusiasm after the Gulf War, senior officers and top think tanks predicted in the sure that the future “the MTR (Military Technological Revolution) promises... to imbue the information loop with near-perfect clarity and accuracy, to reduce its operation to a matter of minutes or seconds and, perhaps most important of all, to deny it in its entirety to the enemy.”⁸

In the period before 9-11 Alvin and Heidi Toffler, authors of *War and Anti-War* and other books, provided some of the most popular reading in the US military staff colleges and senior service schools. The Tofflers offered a simplistic general theory of politics and history that argued that society was organized by its technology. The Tofflers maintained that there had been three waves of technological development and the third wave, the one that we are in today, is the “information age.” According to the Tofflers, nations that mastered the technology of their “wave” could be expected to be highly successful. Nations that failed to master the technology of their era would fall disastrously behind.⁹ The Tofflers’ theories were closely related to fundamental Marxist theory with one essential difference. Instead of Marx’s belief that society was organized by economics, and that economics mattered above all other possible factors, the Tofflers substituted technology as the driving force for society and history.¹⁰ In our staff colleges and senior service schools in the 1990s and our field grade officer students commonly bandied about the “three wave” construct of history and politics as if this were accepted truth.¹¹ The idea that society was organized by technology was very comforting—and very untrue. Just like Karl Marx, the Toffler’s theory ignored the significance of the intangible aspects of human nature such as the power of religion and ethnic nationalism. Indeed, it was these factors, and not technology, that were the driving force behind most of the conflicts after 1991.

Another essential element of the US military groupthink of the 1990s was the belief that war meant conflicts between established states, and that such conflicts between state and non-state forces, or conflicts between non-state factions, were the exception to warfare and not the norm. As already noted, this belief failed to meet the reality test even at the

time of its greatest popularity. Yet, after the First Gulf War, the US military was afflicted with a serious case of victory disease and the primary service efforts in studying future wars tended to ignore the rising tide of non-state conflicts and violent movements. The officially-sponsored studies, of which there were many, instead focused on a wide variety of theoretical threats by peer competitors or other state threats. Almost all the probable scenarios studied at the time were about conventional, state on state wars in which one could count on technology being decisive.¹²

An ahistorical Armed Forces

Another common obstacle to clear analysis in the US military culture is a tendency for military leaders to know little about history. Senior leaders have often exhibited an amazing level of ignorance about operations even in the recent past. For example, in 1965 the USAF chief of Staff, General McConnell, described the use of airpower in South Vietnam as “truly unique in the annals of aerial warfare.”¹³ In fact, counterinsurgency was nothing new for the US Air Force. The Air Force had contributed aid and advisors to the very successful counterinsurgency campaigns in Greece from 1947 to 1949 and in the Philippines from 1946 to 1955. Yet, it is no surprise that McConnell could not recall such operations by his own service. There had been little mention in any of the service journals at the time about the US Army and US Air Force experience and lessons from these counterinsurgency campaigns. After the campaigns in Greece and the Philippines there was almost no effort by any of the services to write an official military history of the US experience in these campaigns and learn lessons.¹⁴ Because only a few personnel had been involved in those conflicts there was little awareness of the many lessons that had been learned about fighting irregular enemies. Thus, the US military entered the Vietnam War with a senior leadership and an officer corps that was generally clueless about the conduct of a counterinsurgency campaign.

Following Vietnam the US military supported a highly successful counterinsurgency campaign in El Salvador from 1981 to 1992. The war ended very successfully—with El Salvador a stable democratic nation and an ally. Again, almost nothing was written

about the conflict in the US military journals and, just as in the successful campaigns in Greece and the Philippines, no effort whatsoever was made to write an official history of the El Salvador operation.¹⁵

The trend of historical ignorance about non-state conflicts among the military officer corps continues. As the insurgency in Iraq was becoming serious in the summer of 2003, General Richard Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, remarked, “This enemy is not like any enemy we’ve fought before.”¹⁶ Having been trained in the post-Vietnam era, General Myers only understood conventional war and was apparently unaware that the US military had contended against irregular forces in Somalia in the 1990s and in Lebanon in the 1980s, or that the US military had helped El Salvador defeat a major insurgency from 1980-1992.

Politically correct language

One of the major legacies of the Boomer Generation has been the mandating of politically correct language throughout the institutions of government. The Boomer Generation tends to avoid clear and direct language, preferring euphemisms, indirect, and even deliberately confusing language. The culture of “politically correct” language has become so pervasive in the last thirty years that it now serves to inhibit our ability to state problems or analysis clearly. Today a vast amount of intellectual energy is employed simply to avoid clarity or to make any reference to a matter that might possibly offend someone.

A recent memo published by the Department of Homeland Security for its employees the department’s leaders cautioned American government personnel not to use the term “Islamist” or “Jihadist” --despite the very long historical use of both terms and the clear meaning that both terms convey. The intention of the decree was to ensure that no Moslem could possibly be offended by linking terrorism and violence to any group espousing an Islamic justification for their actions. The problem is that such an approach forces us to ignore history and the reality of many millions of Moslems who, albeit a minority, firmly believe in an Islamic justification for violence. (Note: The term Jihadist

was used in the 1850s in the Indian Mutiny by Moslems fighting to restore the Mogul Emperor to India's throne). To further confuse the issue, the Department of Homeland Security's action led them to provide us with a new term for the fight against radical Islam-- "The Global Struggle for Security and Progress" – a term so Orwellian and devoid of meaning that it truly makes me wonder whether we won the Cold War—at least intellectually.¹⁷

The spirit of politically correct language has also become the norm in our service schools and staff colleges. Recently at the Army Command and General Staff College a student proposed that we not use the term "fascist" in referring to any Moslem movement. Rather, we should just declare that we are at war with "fascism." This sounds very nice and fits in beautifully with the Boomer mindset-- until one realizes that a clear and literal interpretation of the term would now mean that the United States was at war with a small northern Italian political party run by Mussolini's granddaughter, a peaceful organization that operates within the rule of law and has done nothing to bother America.

The use of euphemistic and unclear language has also slipped into US military doctrine and threatens to muddy our most basic military thinking. When the small team of authors of FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency was writing the doctrine in 2006 there were senior officers in the Pentagon who had serious problems in dealing with the straightforward language of the early published drafts of the field manual. For example, Chapter 6 of the manual dealt with training and developing the host nation's security forces and spoke of the need to first evaluate the security forces and identify the dysfunctional aspects of the forces. With this understanding, the US planners would have to work with the host nation leadership to formulate a plan to correct the worst dysfunctions. Some senior officers in the Pentagon strongly objected to the use of the term "dysfunctional" and noted that a third world power reading the American field manual might be offended --a very serious offense for a member of the Boomer Generation. In the final published version the very clear term "dysfunctional" was reduced to "biases." This means that rampant corruption in the security forces, participation in ethnic cleansing, running death squads, or even carrying out genocide now counts as a "bias" in our official doctrine. The new official wording,

while inoffensive, also undermines a clear understanding of a degree of urgency and seriousness that we face in helping third world nations to address their most serious problems.

Such an approach to language might prevent hurt sensibilities, but one wonders whether the loss of the ability to communicate clearly on essential strategic and operational issues is a price worth paying. If it is, then someone in the top leadership ought to make the case to explain why obscure language is preferable to clear language.

Future Battlespace

Drawing a reasonably accurate picture of the likely conflicts of the next twenty years is not very difficult if we look at the current trends and likely behaviors of hostile nations. The events several troubled regions, as well as the actions of competitors and enemies over the last twenty years provides some clear indications of the threats that the US and allied nations will have to contend with.

First of all, there will be *A LOT* of internal conflicts in regions such as Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Central Asia, and parts of the Far East. These conflicts will be sometimes primarily motivated by economic and ideological concerns, but more often the case of conflict will be ethnicity and religion. The various groups and factions will attempt to seize the power of the government by force. Some groups will use violence to carve out a position as an autonomous state or region. Groups carrying out an insurgency against the government, or simply contending for power as a faction in an imploded state, will use whatever technology is available. A wide variety of basic and very sophisticated weapons can be bought on the international market for groups that have money. Some of the warring groups will turn to crime to raise the funds for weapons. Others will have their weapons supplied by outside powers, perhaps covertly. Some groups will be very astute and well-financed and very capable and will be very tough opponents. Others will be poorly financed and equipped and incompetently led and somewhat easier to defeat.

These violent groups, factions, militias, and so on will threaten the governments of nations friendly to the United States. Some groups and movements will threaten the security and stability of whole regions. However, it should be noted that the violence will be driven overwhelmingly by local concerns. Yet, despite the local nature of the conflicts, we will be drawn into many of them. If our allies are threatened, or the stability of strategic regions is threatened, or if it is likely that a group will take control and create a sanctuary for anti-American terrorists, then the US will have to get involved. The most likely American response will not be an outright invasion. After the experience in Iraq the American public will not be inclined to support any direct US military action unless the provocation is absolutely clear and a convincing threat is posed to American interests.

The most likely American response to a threat to an ally, or a threat to US national interests, will be to provide economic and military aid, advice and support for friendly governments, regional organizations, and interests that are threatened by internal and external forces. Al Qaeda and various related and spin-off organizations will not cause these local conflicts, but they will use such conflicts to their advantage, much as the Soviet Union used local conflicts to undermine the Western powers during the Cold War. Even though the conflicts will not be about us --meaning America-- our involvement in the support of a government or faction will undoubtedly change the dynamics of the conflict. Local forces can be expected to quickly gang up against a US supported government or faction, and most local forces in opposition will readily accept outside help, be it trained fighters, money, or weapons. In every case the hostile factions will try to paint the US as the instigator of the conflict and cause of the problem and as a brutal and murderous aggressor. They will have considerable success in doing so.

We can predict that nations hostile to us will find it to their advantage to sell arms to insurgents and rebel factions, or supply them with money. Why should any nation directly attack the United States, and risk a terrible defeat, when they can invest relatively small amount of money and effort in supporting a campaign to see the US weakened and bankrupted? If we do not intervene in local and regional conflicts where our friends and interests are directly threatened, then American allies will fail and our influence in the

world and in some vital regions will diminish. If we intervene and then fail, then we again lose and pay a stiff price in loss of national credibility. Therefore, if I were a nation hostile to the US it would certainly be in my strategic interest to covertly support internal groups in other countries that are acting against the interests of America's allies and interests. If my proxy group fails, then I have not lost much. If they succeed, then the US has sustained yet another blow. An enemy might believe that time is on their side and that a campaign to slowly wear down the United States has a high chance of success.

Given this reasoning, the threat over the next two decades is not the conventional state threat we would like to fight— but rather the unconventional threat that we have so much trouble understanding. Why should any group target our strengths directly when they can use the indirect approach and target our national will with minimal risk to themselves?

How we should meet the threat

Although technology is an important thing for our military to have, it will not be the main requirement to defeat the likely future threats. In fighting unconventional, non-state enemies nation building is not an option—it is a necessity. Equipping and supporting the local forces and training them to fight their own wars are very old concepts— and such concepts are still central to success today. If we ought to have learned any lesson from Vietnam it is that we cannot fight and win another nation's internal conflict for them. Success in defeating irregular groups depends on building and developing local institutions. Our failure in Vietnam was that we failed to help the South Vietnamese to build strong institutions as we took over their war.

We are currently not organized for the mission of nation building. Today there exists a huge gap between our official doctrine and our strategy. There are the two sides to nation building, the military and the civilians. The civilian side of nation building is just as important, often more important, than the military side. Helping a nation under stress develop its economy and helping a government build sound institutions are vital counterinsurgency tasks. Our doctrine and published national strategies say that economic development and institutional development is vitally important. Yet, if economic

development is as important as the military operations, why is the US today trying to develop a Rube Goldberg-like system of civilian volunteers who will train and prepare themselves on a part-time basis and then commit themselves to being called up on short notice? Such a system might be dirt cheap—but sometimes you get just what you pay for. A civilian reserve system will not ensure that enough people with the right skills and experience and language background will be ready and fully prepared to leave their civilian professions and devote years or months to a risky endeavor overseas.

If nation building is important then we need a cadre of full time experts with the right kind of training and preparations. Increasing the USAID is the obvious solution. Supplementing them with some kind of civilian reserve force would be nice, but dependence upon a volunteer force that has yet to be trained and organized makes little sense. In the matter of contingency operations rapid deploy ability is important—for civilians, too. It would make little sense to eliminate most of the regular military forces and carry out contingency and intervention operations with the National Guard. It ought to be a scandal that seven years after 9-11 the State Department is still woefully short of the right number and type of personnel to man provincial reconstruction teams in Afghanistan or to supervise aid and development programs in unstable areas.

Recruiting and educating the right kind of people for USAID could be easily accomplished through a scholarship program in America's universities. The State Department can provide generous scholarships for engineering students, or business and economics majors, as well as other fields most necessary in nation building operations. In return, such students would, upon graduating, have to be ready to undergo eighteen months of training, to include language training and self defense training, and then face an eighteen month deployment to support aid operations in a country such as Afghanistan. With the right incentives, and a strong career program, I believe that we could recruit some very high caliber personnel to perform the vital civilian side of the nation building mission.

Ensuring that the civilian side and the military side of nation building operations are coordinated requires establishing an organization such as CORDS in Vietnam. It is precisely in the lack of proper organization where we have our most serious problems in meeting the current and future threats. Today, as in Vietnam from 1961-1967, the government efforts in countering insurgencies, supporting allies, and nation building are hampered by a confusing array of competing organizations and chains of command. Unity of effort needs to be more than a buzzword or convenient slogan. Unless it becomes a reality we will not be able to employ our considerable resources effectively. The mistake being made today is an emphasis on elaborate committee-type structures and excruciatingly detailed interservice and interagency agreements designed to coordinate efforts-- but actually result in adding to the confusion. Every agency, military and civilian, works as if by instinct to protect its own turf. CORDS was highly effective because it created a single command structure and made one individual fully responsible for the effort. There was considerable resistance to the CORDS concept because it placed military and civilians together in the same chain of command – with the CORDS chief being a civilian. Reviving such an organization to coordinate reconstruction and advisory efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq would be a huge step forwards. One of the problems that we face, however, is simple lack of historical perspective. Little was ever written about the CORDS program. As with so many other successful programs and campaigns, some of the most important counterinsurgency lessons from past campaigns were never learned.

The changes the military need to effectively deal with the unconventional threats of the next twenty years are partly organizational and partly cultural. Again one sees a large gap between official doctrine and stated policy and the reality. The US National Security Strategy, the joint doctrine of the military, and the individual service doctrines all pay considerable lip service to the importance of Foreign Internal Defense (FID), namely training, advising, and equipping allied nations. For example, the traditional FID approach of supporting the legitimacy of the host nation government is stressed throughout the new Army/Marine counterinsurgency doctrine. A long chapter, Chapter 6, is devoted to discussing the training and advising of the host nation security forces. The doctrine stresses a comprehensive approach to training and discusses not only the training

of the host nation military forces, but also of the police and the civilian staff of the defence ministry.¹⁸ Taken as a whole, the doctrine is strongly oriented towards nation building and emphasizes building both military and social institutions. If the host nation can establish strong institutions with our help, then it will be able to defeat the forces of insurgency and terrorism.

Unfortunately, our FID effort has been lagging in Afghanistan and Iraq. Major changes will be needed to face the challenges of those insurgencies and of other nation building operations in the future. From 2003 to 2005 the US and Coalition partners largely ignored the need for a coordinated program to train and advise the Iraqi security forces. What emerged was an ad hoc program developed largely on the initiative of local commanders without dedicated resources or a master plan. The US military was slow to provide adequate personnel and resources to the mission although things began to slowly improve after 2005. Yet even in late 2006 the teams sent out to train and mentor the Iraqi forces were often reservists who were selected for the mission at the last moment and sent to carry out an exceptionally difficult mission without special training or preparation.¹⁹ The Army is not the only service where the FID effort has lagged. Seven years after 9-11 the US Air Force still has fewer than 300 personnel who are specialists in the mission of training foreign air forces. It is but a fraction of the FID specialist capability that is needed today. Yet members of AFSOC have been arguing their case for expansion for years-- with apparently little effect. In this case we are not talking about a huge and expensive program, but a small increase in personnel with special and urgently needed capabilities.²⁰ The lack of resources and personnel to perform a mission officially recognized as essential remains one of the greatest gaps between doctrine and the actual practice of our leadership.

While the lacks of funds and personnel have limited America's ability to perform one of the most important counterinsurgency/counterterrorism missions, the American military culture is also a prime culprit. The general perception throughout the US Army and US Air Force officer ranks is that serving as an advisor or trainer for a foreign force will serve as a "career killer" and barrier to advancement. When an officer's records are reviewed by superior officers who only understand and value service with US units in conventional

operations their service as trainers and advisors will be given less value. This is a very legitimate fear. Indeed, this is generally what happened to the officers who served as trainers and advisors with the South Vietnamese forces in the 1960s. Time spent doing this arduous and difficult task was counted as time wasted by the clever careerists in top positions in the Pentagon who invariably preferred officers who had only served with US units.²¹ As someone who has been teaching US field grade officers since 1991 I believe that the prejudice that prevailed against the advisory mission is pervasive in our services today—and for the same reasons as in the Vietnam era.

Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl has proposed that the US Army establish a separate “Advisor Corps” that would manage the careers of officers and NCOs in this field and allow officers and NCOs who show talent in this mission to advance in rank.²² John Nagl's proposed solution has great merit. We may have to implement some major organizational changes to the armed forces if we are to see the nation-building and advisory mission successfully carried out. A model for how an Advisory Corps might be set up is in the Army's recent creation of an Acquisition Corps, in which qualified field grade officers with full branch qualifications and 10-15 years of service in their original branch are allowed to transfer into the small and specialist Acquisition Corps.

We have armed forces that are still organized around conventional war. That is not necessarily a bad thing. I would certainly not argue for a complete makeover of the armed forces. Instead, we need to add specialized niche forces to carry out the nation-building and advisory missions. Like the Special Forces, these forces need not be large. But the personnel needed for the nation building and unconventional warfare and advisory missions require unique expertise in many fields considered arcane by the conventionally-oriented force. Yet one cannot succeed in unconventional conflicts with unconventional enemies without such expertise. The officers involved in nation building/ advisory operations will require a depth of knowledge of unconventional warfare and the ability to easily operate with NGOs, coalition forces, and State Department personnel. Additional niche units need to be added to the US armed forces, and the armed forces of our allies. Such specialized forces will include human intelligence units, Military Police units, units

that specialize in the FID mission, civil affairs units, psychological operations units and individual foreign area officers. It will take time and effort to grow these kinds of specialist units and individuals. Yet it is a far better alternative than relying on contract personnel who may not be qualified or available for rapid deployment in a crisis.

On the civilian side of nation building and unconventional warfare our organizational response ought to look to past programs and organizations that worked well. One area of major concern in every nation-building operation has been the training and development of effective civilian police forces. When there was high interest in counterinsurgency the US State Department established the International Police Academy in Washington in 1963. The International Police Academy was intended to provide a thorough professional education to police leaders of third world countries. An estimated 5,000 police officers graduated from the full course during the eleven years of its existence. A further 3,600 foreign police officers attended the shorter courses offered by the school. The International Police Academy was practical response to one of the most urgent requirements of nation-building. Unfortunately, in the aftermath of Vietnam the US Congress abolished the International Police Academy in 1974. Today there is no coherent program for the training of third world police or security forces. The effort is split among the State Department and the armed forces and has resulted in small and poorly supported efforts. A very good first step to straightening out the current mess would be to revive the International Police Academy and begin a large scale program to train third world police commanders.²³

Conclusion

The threat in the next two decades will be primarily unconventional. The real threat lies not in a conventional military defeat of US forces but in the loss of our influence in the world, the coercion of our allies, a weakening of our international alliance to fight terrorist supporting states, and the consequent acceleration of the destabilization process in several regions. Those destabilized regions are likely to become sanctuaries for terrorism and anti-American forces.

Much of the solution lies in better organization. We need to remake our organizations for nation-building, for military civil affairs operations, and we need to provide the military and civilian organizations devoted to nation-building and alliance support equal status with the fighting forces. We need to simplify our organization charts—much in the way that CORDS in South Vietnam successfully unified a large number of uncoordinated and disparate efforts.

Despite all the high technology and talk of a revolution in military affairs, success in counterinsurgency still requires helping the host nation to fight its own war. Given the historical record, few American efforts of the last 60 years have paid off more handsomely in strategic terms, and at relatively little expense in manpower and equipment. FM 3-24 states in its opening chapter on the principles of counterinsurgency that “many of the best weapons don’t shoot.” Weapons will be highly skilled units and organizations. Training for our allies is a weapon. Information is a weapon. In short—the future battlespace for the US military will be the training centers for third world armies. The battlespace for the State Department will be training civilian government workers and conducting economic and infrastructure development.

Organizational and cultural change is much tougher than bringing in new technology. Within the military and the civilian government agencies the natural response has been, and will be, a strong tendency to resist any simplification of the organizational chart. The armed forces leadership will mightily resist giving a small corps of area and intelligence specialist and nation building experts equal status to the combat soldiers. Meeting the security challenges of the future will require a drastic change in the way we train and educate leaders. And it will cost some money. However, personnel such as area experts, human intelligence and civil affairs specialists cannot be created through quickie “shake and bake” programs or programs designed to keep cost low as their primary criteria. To do the mission right we need to be prepared to spend the money to train and educate people properly. The good news is that training the right people for unconventional warfare is not nearly as expensive as developing new high tech weapons. We are talking about millions,

not billions, to teach people languages and provide area expertise. The downside is that it takes as long to develop a truly competent area specialist as it does to develop a new weapons system— more than a decade of hard work, likely longer.

¹ Hans von Seeckt, Essay on “Schlagworte (Buzzwords),” *Gedanken eines Soldaten* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1935), 7–18.

² James S. Corum, “The Spanish Civil War: Lessons Learned and Not Learned by the Major Powers.” *Journal of Military History*. Spring 1998. Also selected for publication as a chapter in *The Second World War*, Vol. VI. Ed Jeremy Black (London: Ashgate, 2008)

³ A sampling of the major articles on Spain—by no means a complete list—includes Captain Wendell Johnson’s articles in the *Infantry Journal*: “Deadlock in Spain” (Nov.-Dec. 1938), 494-503; “The Spanish War: A Review of the Best Foreign Opinion” (July- Aug. 1938), 351-56; “Franco’s Spring Offensive: Zaragoza to the Sea” (May-June 1938), 242-50; Colonel Conrad Lanza’s articles in the *Field Artillery Journal*: “Lessons from Spain” (May-June 1938), 183-96, “Open Warfare” (Nov.-Dec. 1939), 533-45, “Some Lessons from the Spanish War” (July-Aug. 1938), 406-16; Brigadier General Henry Reilly’s articles, “Attack in Spain,” *Field Artillery Journal* (Sept.-Oct. 1939), pp. 331-35, and “Proving Ground in Spain,” *Army Ordnance* (May-June 1939), 333-36; Emilio Caneveri, “Forecasts from the War in Spain,” *Army Ordnance* (March-April 1939), 273-80; Major General J. F. C. Fuller’s articles, “The Spanish War,” *Army Ordnance* (Nov.-Dec. 1938), p.139, “The Tank in Spain,” *Army Ordnance* (July-Aug. 1938), 24-27, and “Guns in Spain,” *The Coast Artillery Journal* (Nov.-Dec. 1937), 453-57; Maj. Robert Mackin, “Airplanes Can Be Stopped,” *The Coast Artillery Journal* (Sept.-Oct. 1937), 396-401; Maj. Thomas Phillips, “Air Power and Troop Movement,” *The Coast Artillery Journal* (May-June 1938), 179-83; Brigadier General H. S. Hawkins, “Imagination Gone Wild,” *The Cavalry Journal* (Nov.-Dec. 1938), 491-97; and Fred Mertin, “Cavalry in the War in Spain,” *The Cavalry Journal* (Nov.-Dec. 1938).

⁴ Brig. Gen. Hap Arnold, “Air Lesson from Current Wars,” *U.S. Air Services* (May 1938), 17.

⁵ Maj. Robert Mackin, “Airplanes Can Be Stopped,” 398-399.

⁶ Ibid. 397-99. See also Capt. Wendell Johnson, “The Spanish War: A Review of the Best Foreign Opinion,” *The Coast Artillery Journal* (July-Aug. 1938), pp. 299-300 and Cpt. Wendell Johnson, “Spain: A Year and a Half of Modern War,” *Infantry Journal* (March-April 1938), 137-38.

⁷ For some examples of the statements common in the 1990s, see Barry Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*, (Collingdale, PA: Diane Publishing Co.) 1996.

⁸ Ibid. 3.

⁹ See Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War* (New York: Little Brown and Co, 1993). Also *The Third Wave* (New York, Bantam, 1980).

¹⁰ For an excellent critique of Toffler thought see R.L. DiNardo and Daniel J. Hughes, “Some Cautionary Thoughts on Information Warfare,” *Airpower Journal* - Winter 1995.

¹¹ The author can claim a broad knowledge of the US military service schools of the era. The author taught US field grade officers in the USAF School of Advance Air and Space Studies at Air University from 1991 to 2004. The author also served part-time on the faculty of the Army War College 2002-2004 and attended the Air War College in residence in 1997-1998.

¹² For some examples of Air Force thinking in the period see Jeffrey Barnett, *Future War: An Assessment of Aerospace Campaigns in 2010* (Air University Press, Maxwell AFB, 1995). See also *The world of 2020 and Alternative Futures*,(Air University Study, June 1994). The preface by Gen Merrill McPeak was a celebration of the US military’s Global Reach, Global Presence, Global Power. For an army view see Gordon Sullivan and Col. James Dubik, *Envisioning Future Warfare* (US Army Command and Staff College, 1995).

¹³ “The Role of Airpower in Viet-Nam,” Address by General John. P. McConnell, Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force, before the Dallas Council on World Affairs, Dallas, Texas, 16 September 1965.

¹⁴ The only official military history of the US effort in the Philippines was a short monograph published by the US Army Center for Military History in 1987—more than three decades after the events. See Major

Lawrence Greenberg, *The Hukbalahap Insurrection*, CMH Pub 93-88 (Washington: US Army Center for Military History, 1987)

¹⁵ The very ahistorical and high tech bias of Air force culture was expressed in a recent article by USAF major General Charles Dunlap of the Air Staff. Dunlap points out, “the Air Force identifies the past with obsolescence and for the air weapon, obsolescence equates to defeat. This is why, for example, FM 3-24’s heavy reliance on experiences in long-past counterinsurgency efforts does not always resonate with Airmen the same way it does with Soldiers.” Major General Charles Dunlap, “Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers,” *Military Review*, September-October, 2007. 126-130. See 127.

¹⁶ Rowan Scarborough, “US Miscalculates Security for Iraq,” *Washington Times*, August 23, 2003. 1.

¹⁷ See Bret Stephens, “Homeland Security Newspeak”, *Wall Street Journal*, 27 May 2008, p. A 19

¹⁸ FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* (December, 2006) para 6-22.

¹⁹ Greg Jaffe, “Problems Afflict U.S. Army Program to Advise Iraqis,” *Wall Street Journal*, 18 October, 2006, p. 1.

²⁰ See Jerome Klingaman, “Transforming CAA: Issues and Initiatives” pp. 80-112 in USAF Checkmate, Vantage Points: the Use of Air and Space Power in counterinsurgency Operations and the Global War on Terrorism proceedings of the 2005 Air and Space Power Strategy conference. AFSOC has been arguing for years that we need more effort for FID. See also Michael Koster, *Foreign Internal Defense: Does Air Force Special Operations Have What it Takes*. (Air University Press, 1993).

²¹ For the best study of US advisors in Vietnam see James Wilbanks, *Abandoning Vietnam* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas 2005).

²² See John A. Nagl, Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps, Center for a New American Security, June 2007.

²³ On the International Police Academy and the state of our current police training efforts see Walter Ladwig, “Training Foreign Police: A Missing Aspect of U.S. Security Assistance to Counterinsurgency,” *Comparative Strategy*, October 2007, 285-293.