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Violence in context: Mapping the strategies and operational art of irregular warfare

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ABSTRACT

The malaise that the United States, and the West, have experienced in recent campaigns stems in large part from unclear thinking about war, its political essence, and the strategies needed to join the two. Instead, analysis and response are predicated on entrenched theoretical concepts with limited practical utility. The inadequacy of understanding has spawned new, and not so new, terms to capture unanticipated trends, starting with the re-discovery of “insurgency” and “counterinsurgency” and leading to discussion of “hybrid threats” and “gray-zone” operations. New terminology can help, but the change must go deeper. Challenging analytical orthodoxy, this article sets out a unifying approach for the study of political violence, or more accurately: *violent politics*. It provides a conceptual foundation that helps to make sense of recent shifts in warfare. In effect, it offers sorely needed theoretical insights into the nature of strategy and guides the process of responding to nontraditional threats.

KEYWORDS Strategy; counterinsurgency; terrorism; hybrid; gray zone

The United States entered the 21st century brimming with confidence at its military and strategic prowess. The campaigns of the 1990s had provided opportunities to apply emerging technologies associated with the Revolution in Military Affairs, or RMA—satellites, precision bombs, and information technology—which appeared to give Washington a qualitative edge in contemporary conflict. Under the leadership of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and with the backing of President George W. Bush, the top priority for the U.S. defense establishment at the turn of the century was to *transform* itself to exploit fully this cutting-edge technology. As Bush (2001) put it in a major address in February 2001: “Influence is measured in information, safety is gained in stealth, and force is projected on the long arc of precision-guided weapons ... The best way to keep the peace is to redefine war on our terms.”

Two decades on, the limitations of America’s military strength have become clear. Rather than define war on its terms, the United States has

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been caught flatfooted by its adversaries' adaptation and struggles even to grasp the nature and purpose of contemporary conflict. The concern is not a lack of hardware, or of technology, but rather an inability—proved in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere—to apply martial capabilities alongside other instruments of national power to effect desired political change. The malaise has compelled the emergence of new—and not so new—terms to describe today's messy realities, starting with the re-discovery of *insurgency* and *counterinsurgency* in the late 2000s (in an ill-defined relationship with *terrorism* and *counterterrorism*) and leading, more recently, to discussion of *hybrid* threats and *gray-zone* operations. Though critics will insist that these phenomena are hardly new, they might as well be to a defense and security establishment unwilling to exit its comfort zone and challenge its preconceptions.

The introduction of new terms can be helpful in framing unfamiliar challenges, yet each addition also betrays the inadequacy of the original lexicon—and of the analytical framework it undergirds. At some point, it may be necessary to question the core assumptions of our understanding of warfare: its character, expression, and purpose. Indeed, the study of war operates on the basis of theoretical barriers and unfounded presumptions, which constitute an up-stream source of analytical friction with real implications for how policy is conceived and implemented. It is therefore our contention that unless the United States, and its allies, adopts a more politically astute and strategically integrated way of understanding organized violence, it will repeat the mistakes of recent campaigns in wars to come.

To encourage the needed change, this article sets forth an analytical approach to grapple with political violence, or more accurately, *violent politics* (a sub-set of *contentious politics*). The approach discussed below serves to map both irregular strategy and operational art, whether violent or non-violent, by either state or non-state actors. Though the framework does not seek to comment specifically on *traditional* warfare, its treatment of *irregular warfare* (that is, not regular or traditional) informs, through its emphasis on politics and legitimacy, nearly all expressions of physical coercion. In effect, the manner of analyzing violence presented in this article opens a door to sorely needed theoretical insights into the nature of contention across the standard spectrums and dichotomies. By so doing, it also guides the construction of an effective response to the untraditional and ambiguous threats of the 21st century.

The argument proceeds along four parts. A preliminary section treats the enduring conceptual challenges in making strategic assessments of irregular threats and their effect in subverting the necessary response. A second section explores the idea of the “irregular threat” in its strategic and operational art dimensions, and introduces a method of mapping this challenge. The third section highlights the key insights provided through this

mapping exercise to all manner of irregular and untraditional threats engaged in violent politics. The fourth section speaks directly to the corollaries that this approach and these insights raise for the construction of a response to challenges faced. As a whole, the article proposes a new framework of analysis that may address conceptual hurdles and thereby provoke much-needed bureaucratic, cultural, and political change.

Enduring conceptual challenges

Any review of U.S.—or of Western—strategic engagements since 9/11 must conclude that Washington and its allies are conceptually under-equipped to grasp, let alone counter, violent political challenges. This intellectual limitation did not begin with the terrorist attacks of 2001 (see Cassidy, 2004; McMaster, 2003; or Ucko, 2010b) but has become more evident through the campaigns that followed. Reports on lessons identified are legion, and the prescriptions in each too numerous to capture, but on aggregate they point to three main areas of conceptual weakness (Hammes, 2015; Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, 2012). These must be acknowledged and explored so as to arrive at a more useful way of thinking.

First, it became clear following the 9/11 attacks that the United States and many of its European allies had unlearned whatever they might once have known about irregular warfare, particularly the matter at hand: terrorism. In responding to attacks by al-Qaeda, no real distinction was made between the use of terrorism *as part of a strategy* and the use of terrorism *as a strategy* in and of itself. As Wiewiorka (1995, 2004) and others have argued, some groups use terror as one of many “methods,” yet for others it becomes all-consuming, that is, it becomes the “logic” of the political project being pursued. We can term the former set of actors *insurgents* and the latter *terrorists*—in the end, the labeling is secondary to the implications raised by the distinction, particularly for the response. With terrorism, armed politics is divorced from the purported mass base in whose name action is undertaken, so the state response can focus on the perpetrators themselves. These clandestine actors are in effect the sum total of the movement, and, because of the group’s failure to seek or to achieve societal resonance, it is highly reliant on the limited manpower that it has been able to attract. With insurgency, however, a focus on rooting out “the terrorists,” to the exclusion of finding political solutions to sources of conflict, often leads to new cycles of violence that the operationally astute challenger will exploit to mobilize additional support (Marks, 2007c, pp. 483–484).

The American-led response to the 9/11 attacks made no real distinction between these two forms of terrorism. The “War on Terror,” in its initial years, did little to address the reasons for isolated yet significant pockets of support for al-Qaeda or the factors that might spread it further. A Pew Poll

taken in 2013, for instance, revealed that more than 15% or more of those polled in Egypt, Tunisia, Indonesia, the Palestinian territories, and Malaysia had a “favorable” view of al-Qaeda (Kohut & Bell, 2013). As Lindholm and Zúquete (2010) convincingly argue, this was not just a terrorist group; its self-proclaimed “jihad” exploited a transnational social movement and propelled its concerns onto the global stage, awakening, extending, and radicalizing a pre-existing network. Yet not only was the “War on Terror” negligent of al-Qaeda’s *focoist* insurgent approach to strategy (Payne, 2011), it was also conducted in a bullish manner that all but ensured the empowerment of al-Qaeda’s counter-hegemonic ideology.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, counterinsurgency emerged as a corrective to the counter-terrorist lens but in a way that, at most, shaped only security operations. The very use of the term itself, *counterinsurgency*, was problematic, as it described a purely expeditionary and predominantly military activity, rather than the political campaigns of armed reform envisaged in the traditional literature (Galula, 1964, p. 63). Indeed, the lack of a truly political response, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, led to the failure of so-called “surges” in both theaters. In Iraq, the consequences of empowering sectarian Shia elements within the government were left mostly unaddressed, fueling schisms and violent conflict well beyond the departure of U.S. troops (Parker, 2012; Simon, 2008). In Afghanistan, no political plan emerged to address the conflict’s regional dimension or to de-conflict the multitude of contradictory Western aims (Auerswald & Saideman, 2014; Noetzel & Scheipers, 2007; Stapleton & Keating, 2015). It did not help that, in both theaters, the United States gave counterinsurgency only two or three years to work, betraying faith in this concept as a quick military fix to deep-rooted political problems.

America’s neglect of counterinsurgency’s political essence is anything but new. The tendency harks back to the awkward conversation between an American officer, Harry Summers, and his Vietnamese counterpart, Colonel Tu, in 1975 shortly after the Vietnam War. In a story, now well known, Summers suggested that the Vietnamese had “never defeated us on the battlefield,” to which Tu responded: “That may be so, but it is also irrelevant” (Summers, 2012, p. 1). The point is that it is the *political outcome* that determines victory, not military performance. By this necessary standard, Iraq and Afghanistan are clearly Western defeats, regardless of martial prowess in tactical and operational encounters, and despite rhetorical invocations of “smart power” and “transformational diplomacy” (Armitage & Nye, 2007; Rice, 2008).

A second, related, conceptual weakness concerns the military’s pre-eminence in strategic affairs. The American way of war, whether in “regular” or “irregular” settings, does not fully accept “the cold Clausewitzian rationalisation of war as an instrument of policy” (Hoffman, 1996). Instead, as

Weigley (1977, p. xix) found, apoliticism and absolutism (that is, a preference for annihilation) are stubbornly enduring features of the strategic culture, a reality that has affected also America's European allies. Where peace ends, war starts, and when the war is over, politics resumes (see also Freedman, 2011, p. 16; Strachan, 2006, p. 60).

Though efforts have been made to diversify the overall approach, the search for a more "flexible response," a term coined by the Kennedy administration, or for a more graduated repertoire of action, has not fared well. Within the military sphere, the advent of precision-guided munitions and associated technologies introduced the possibility of tailoring force more creatively to achieve limited ends, but the gulf between violent inputs and political outcomes remains (Buley, 2008). Despite seemingly endless drone strikes, for example, there is little evidence of the United States either running out of targets or significantly diminishing the "terrorist threat," either to itself or its allies.

Within government more broadly, due to cultural, structural, and resource-related factors, it has been difficult to integrate instruments of national power to achieve strategic objectives, and each "instrument" therefore operates either not at all or in a "stove-piped" manner (Lamb & Franco, 2015, p. 243). Despite high-level recognition of the need for a "comprehensive approach," cultural chasms and severe resource imbalances have stymied the integration of development, diplomacy, defense, and intelligence (Greentree, 2013). Similarly, to one scholar, the poor integration of finance ministries within a broader counterterrorism strategy has undermined efforts to address terrorist resourcing, with 15 years of activity having had "little discernible impact" on defunding oppositional organizations, be it the Islamic State or al-Qaeda (Neumann, 2017, p. 102). Writ large, there is simply a refusal to mandate much less implement unity of command and effort, a subject that could (and has) inspired entire books.

The limited scope for blended statecraft also results in a lack of strategic options against adversarial state actors. With regard to the eastern European front separating the Western and Russian spheres of interest, the security guarantees offered through NATO's Article 5 for decades provided the necessary deterrent against aggression. Yet the effect of this article assumes an unambiguous attack—a clear crossing of the Rubicon from peacetime politics to outright war—that can either be entirely deterred or decisively countered through military means. Instead, Russia has experimented with *indirect* ways of exerting influence, by operating under the threshold that would justify an armed response. The arsenal includes cyber-attacks, energy-related threats, electoral interference, limited military provocation, information operations, and other "active measures," along with the use of destabilizing non-state proxies (Eakin, 2017; Kragh & Åsberg, 2017).

Such “gray zone” acts are severe for those targeted, yet Western governments struggle to identify, invest in, and coordinate the capabilities needed to respond. The West can catch up in technological know-how, always its forte, yet it has proved more difficult to build and integrate the non-military capabilities suitable for the “gradualist environment” in between war and peace (Mazarr, 2015, p. 132–134). Effective blending of capabilities and legal authorities within the “interagency” country team is itself a rare feat, and the Central Intelligence Agency is so burdened with supporting military requirements that it cannot fully pursue its natural role in “gray zone” settings (Oakley, forthcoming; Roberts, 2016).

Others have already detected this blind spot and adopted strategies accordingly. Almost 20 years ago, Qiao and Wang (2002) elaborated the concept of “unrestricted warfare,” by which China would use “all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy to accept one’s interests.” In the South China Sea, for example, one author explains how China has acquired greater control not by launching “large-scale offensives against its neighbours,” but by “patiently broadening its influence in the area, often by using civilian or paramilitary means” so that it “now occupies most of the Spratlys, Paracels and Scarborough Shoal” (Woudstra, 2017, p. 280). In the United States, institutional interest in this approach and the development of the required capabilities have lagged, and so it is sorely unprepared for this shift in warfare. The neglect is all the more staggering given the U.S. close and on-going exposure to the sophisticated Taiwan version of unrestricted warfare, and its integration of Republic of China “Pol War” advisory missions into its war efforts in Vietnam, Cambodia, and El Salvador (Marks, 1996).

The third conceptual weakness takes the form of a false dichotomy between state and non-state actors. When this duality is extended to the realm of warfare, it creates a bifurcation between *irregular* scenarios, such as those recently seen in Iraq or Afghanistan, and *regular* or *conventional* operations (also termed *traditional*), such as the 1991 Operation Desert Storm. Though in doctrine and rhetoric, military institutions underline the need to prepare for “full-spectrum” operations, that is, for both of these scenarios, the Western military still shows through its resource allocation and force structure a clear predilection for conventional combat, over and above all other contingencies. For cultural, financial, and psychological reasons, armed services see conventional campaigns as the real business of war and adapt only minimally to “lower-end contingencies,” or what were once called “military operations other than war” (on the power of institutional self-identity, see Builder, 1989). This rank ordering was sustained even during the heights of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, with changes in institutional prioritization accepted only on a temporary basis and in ways that

would not disrupt pre-existing investment patterns (Ucko, 2009, pp. 142–166).

The supposed bifurcation between regular and irregular combat has repeatedly subverted the U.S. military's ability to "learn counterinsurgency," because when given a choice between conventional warfighting and other contingencies, the armed services have favored the former (Blaufarb, 1977; Krepinevich, 2009). Yet if the intent of such prioritization was to prepare the U.S. military for state challengers, it faltered on the assumption that these would, like the United States, stick to traditional forms of combat. Instead, both state and non-state actors have actively sought to blend forms of violence from either side of the operational spectrum. Irregular warfare—best thought of as warfare *unregulated* by the laws and norms of war—has appeal also for state actors seeking to offset traditional military weakness or extend their influence, much as insurgents have both in doctrine and practice utilized conventional combat capabilities to produce a final push and overthrow the regime. The examples of Yorktown, Dienbienphu, or the Islamic State's advance across Iraq in the summer of 2014 come to mind.

By grounding thinking and capability on such a questionable bifurcation, Western armed forces hamper their understanding and response to crossover threats, which are becoming more common due to globalization and adaptation. Western strategists were surprised by Hezbollah's use of conventional approaches within an irregular matrix in its war against Israel in 2006—despite ample familiarity with analogous efforts by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), never mind the Vietnamese doctrine and practice that led to communist victory in Southeast Asia and which both FMLN and FARC drew upon. Following the war in the Middle East in 2006, the Pentagon ran numerous war games and simulation, resulting in the term *hybrid* to describe the apparently new challenge of an adversary mingling conventional, irregular, and other forms of violence (Hoffman, 2007). Even so, almost a decade later, it was again taken aback by Russia's "hybrid approach" in Ukraine and the Near Abroad ("NATO Allies," 2015). The amnesia is truly astonishing, given that hybridity, despite being "the latest buzz word in Washington," has a "historical pedigree [that] goes back at least as far as the Peloponnesian War" (Mansoor, 2012).

Mapping irregular strategies

The introduction of new terms can drive reconsideration of pre-existing assumptions and spur interest in unexpected challenges. Theoretical advances such as these are often necessary, yet in this instance, they rest upon a flawed structure that has proved difficult to displace. Missing is an appropriate framework that captures the unfamiliar, if by now well-established, ways in

which irregular conflict works—a unified approach that can explain and be used to counter evolutions in strategy and operational art. In the absence of such a framework, analysts are left with paradigms that fail, dichotomies that do not hold, and, then, evermore jargon to fill the gaps.

The traditional approach to understanding strategy within Western war colleges—there is no civilian equivalent—has been that of ends-ways-means, a formula most prominently articulated by Arthur F. Lykke. It posits that “strategy equals ends (objectives toward which one strives) plus ways (courses of action) plus means (instruments by which some end can be achieved)” (Lykke, 1989, p. 3). This model forces consideration of three fundamental questions: What is to be achieved, how is it to be done, and what resources are available or needed to do so? It is a model that has suited the military well, but as Meiser (2016) argues, “[t]he ways part of the equation tends to be relegated to a supporting role as the undefined thing linking ends and means” (p. 83). Indeed, within this triptych, it is precisely within the ways that the major changes and challenges have been seen; it is here that the West is taken by surprise and struggles to respond.

Western military thinking has historically conceived of ways as the totality of various *lines of operation*, each defining the force in relation to the enemy (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. IV-28). Lines of operation (LO) concern the physical projection of force across geographical space and are typically visualized using military unit symbols moving via arrows on a map. As the U.S. military has realized, though lines of operation are fundamental analytical tools for the design of military campaigns, they fail to capture the conceptual or intangible spaces that political violence will traverse. Hence, in 2001, the U.S. Army fielded the term *logical line of operation* (LLO) and then, in 2011, *line of effort* (LOE) to define expressions of power or influence where “positional references to an enemy or adversary have little relevance, such as in counterinsurgency or stability operations” (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2001, p. 5–9; Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2011, p. III–28). In other words, whereas the military has traditionally traded mostly in its own currency—the use of force—doctrine now created space for “operations involving many nonmilitary factors”—political, psychological, informational, or economic—for which “lines of effort are often essential to helping commanders visualize how military capabilities can support the other instruments of national power” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. IV-29).

With this doctrinal development, the U.S. military entered a “back to the future” moment in which it unknowingly resurrected the insights of past practitioners of irregular conflict as diverse as the American Patriots of the War of Independence (that is, the Revolutionary War) and the communist theorists of people’s war, such as Mao Tse-tung and the Vietnamese figures Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Truong Chinh. What unites these figures, and their respective approaches to violence, is the adaptation of traditional

military concepts and terminology to encompass political and psychological dimensions. The U.S. military is effectively attempting a similar approach in its doctrine, yet a coherent *national* framework of analysis and action is still lacking. Though the military's cognitive domain theoretically extends into non-military fields, in practice it is still a matter of a military dabbling in and making assumptions about non-military affairs, rather than an integrated political effort of which the military is but one supporting aspect. The doctrinal assertion that "lines of effort are often essential to helping commanders visualize how military capabilities can support the other instruments of national power" assumes, for example, that other instruments of national power are organized, deployed, and integrated in policy-making and execution within active war zones (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. IV-29). Such is not the case.

This disconnect does not surprise, since the fundamental reality is that now, unlike the "then" of the theorists just noted, violence is not seen an *enabler of political and psychological actions*, but as the *principal weapon* to be deployed with all else tactically in support. This necessarily turns irregular reality on its head. Whereas in regular warfare, supporting action is overwhelmingly "nonkinetic" (e.g., psychological operations), in irregular warfare, violence itself is the shaping, or supporting, mechanism for the "nonkinetic" center that is political action amongst the population.

What is still lacking, therefore, is a theoretical framework that places military tasks in their proper supporting relation vis-à-vis the political and which identifies and explores its interaction with other, non-military lines of effort. Such a framework can be constructed by interrogating the irregular conflicts of the past to derive a guide, or blueprint, for analysis and action (for the etiology and origins of this approach, see the work of Thomas A. Marks, e.g., 2005, 2007a, 2007b). "People's war" in particular has left a substantial body of material that has been used to operationalize a truly *political* strategy of war-fighting. As the Chinese noted at the time in their communications with Che Guevara, the revolutionary's construction of a new world is best achieved by a *symbiosis* of kinetic and nonkinetic approaches, something Che's *foco* theory fatefully failed to grasp, relying instead heavily on the use of violence to inspire spontaneous mass mobilization (and leading to Che's death in Bolivia in 1967).

The approach that emerges from this interrogation, then, states simply that a strategy of violent politics involves five possible components: To mobilize people and resources *politically*, find the issues to which they will rally. Simultaneously, win over domestic *allies* who will support the cause on tactical issues even if they hesitate to do so strategically. Use *violence* as appropriate to the situation to enable these two fundamentally political activities. Use *non-violence*, such as subversion, propaganda, offers of negotiations, or inducements, to make violence more effective; this is also known as "political

warfare” (see “George F. Kennan on Organizing Political Warfare,” 1948). And *internationalize* the struggle, making it difficult to contain or terminate within national borders.

What is at hand is the inspiration for five questions that must be asked of any challenge of political violence:

- (1) What is the threat group doing *politically*?
- (2) How is the group exploiting domestic *alliances* to better reach its objective?
- (3) How is *violence* used in support of its political project?
- (4) How is *non-violence* used?
- (5) What is the role of *internationalization* in the group’s struggle?

These questions provide a potential blueprint for the *how* of strategy, the totality and integration of *ways*, or the bridge between means and ends. As displayed below (Figure 1), they can be represented as lines of effort.

In identifying lines of effort on the basis of these questions, one arrives at a snapshot of strategy that transcends dividing lines: between military and political, between state and non-state, and between conventional and irregular. The understanding gleaned through this exercise can be clarified further by grouping the tactical actions of each LOE within their respective *campaigns*, or bundles of activity, producing a bird’s eye view of *operational art*. Figure 1 provides common and relevant examples of such *campaigns*, derived from extensive and repeated application of the framework to real-world cases.

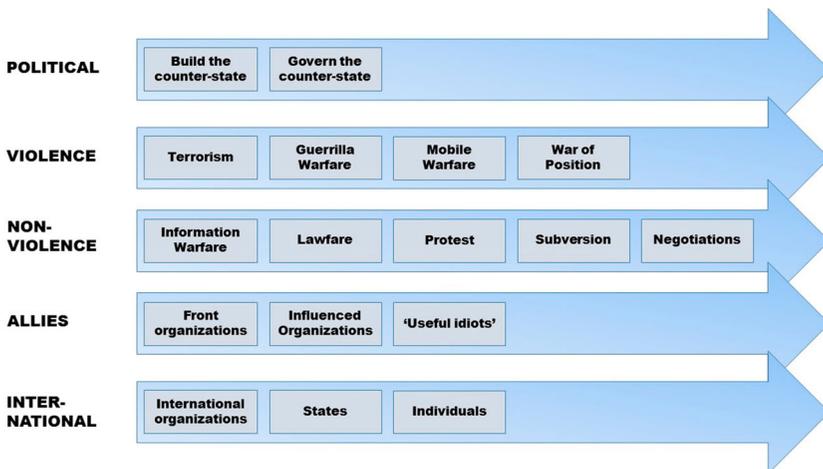


Figure 1. Five lines of effort with sample campaigns, thus comprising the operational art of the strategy.

This ordering exercise nests tactical activity within its proper operational category, displayed above as dynamic *campaigns* within lines of effort, which themselves are positioned in relation to the strategic ends being pursued. Notably, each campaign will itself conceptually contain sub-campaigns, or opportunities to order further the tactical expressions of a group's strategy. For example, the campaign of "terrorism" will be further sub-divided, plausibly, by the categories of targets struck in this manner, be they infrastructure, security forces, dignitaries, international actors, or—simply—the ordinary members of the population. Similarly, a campaign of information warfare may feature sub-campaigns of hash-tag activism, indoctrination, pamphleteering, or the distribution of "fake news" through licit networks. Governance, a campaign within the political LOE, could include sub-campaigns of taxation, schooling, or the provision of basic services.

Clearly, not all threats will use all five lines of effort, and the exact labels given to these lines of effort could be adapted depending on the case, so long as they capture the breadth of the strategy being assessed. The sample campaigns in this above blueprint must also be tailored to the context at hand. Where the framework assists is in encouraging consideration of the full range of theoretical possibilities by which a political collective actor—non-state but also potentially state (as e.g., set forth in *Unrestricted Warfare*)—can achieve its ends. It raises questions necessary to break down the intellectual barriers of the trade and, in this manner, explains the strategic and operational innovations seen in recent years.

Key insights of the framework

The insights generated by the above framework can hardly be termed new. Yet as a foundation for analysis and action they force the internalization of wisdom that tends to receive, at most, lip-service.

The first insight of the framework is gained through its positioning of violence as relational and incidental to politics. This symbiotic linking of war and politics will not surprise scholars or practitioners reared on Clausewitz. Still, despite the frequent invocation of war as "nothing but the continuation of policy with other means" (Clausewitz, 1989, p. 69), the implications of this statement are the exact obverse of how the West understands and wages war. By positioning the use of violence as but one of five lines of efforts in a strategic project, the above framework encourages the view of military activities as either supporting a broader political process or as meaningless.

Applying such a test to the West's most recent campaigns uncovers a disheartening track record. NATO's decision to assist in the removal of Muammar Gaddafi, for example, without considering the likely ramifications of regime change, smacks not only of political myopia but of a severe form of amnesia given the object lesson provided by Iraq on this very point less than a

decade earlier (“President Obama,” 2016). In Afghanistan, a large part of the problem for NATO and the international community was the uncertainty of political aims and how to achieve them, with counter-terrorist prerogatives often conflicting with, or eclipsing entirely, efforts to stand up local institutions capable of sustaining peace and security (Lieven, 2007, pp. 483–484; Saikal, 2012, p. 227; Suhrke, 2008, p. 244). Indeed, political engagement in Afghanistan has remained under-conceptualized and poorly resourced, at worst amounting to peripatetic charity services in the hope of winning hearts and minds (Fishstein & Wilder, 2012). In Iraq, military efforts—even when successful—were based on a political dispensation of power that, unless reformed (and it was not) militated against sustainable stability, never mind peace, and, as such, gains at the tactical and operational level quickly withered (Ucko, 2008).

Certainly, there is—following these disappointing efforts—a broad realization that “you cannot kill your way out of this war.” Yet appreciating the need for a political center has not galvanized serious review of how to operationalize this finding—nor has it prompted a reorganization of the instruments of state or injected the necessary modesty about what the use of force can achieve in isolation (Fishstein & Wilder, 2012, p. 50; Marks, 2010; “Trump Plans 28 Percent Cut,” 2017). Instead, the institutions of political engagement and diplomacy remain under-resourced and poorly structured to carry the political lead around which other instruments of state can rally, all the while policies persist—in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere—in the absence of clearly defined political end-states (Editorial Board, 2017; Gordon, 2017).

The second insight of the above framework lies in its placement of terrorism within its indispensable strategic context. Specifically, by querying whether a group responsible for terrorist attacks is *also* engaging along lines of effort other than merely that of violence, it becomes necessary to distinguish between terrorism as a *method* and terrorism as a *logic*, between violence as one facet of a broader strategy and violence as the totality and upper limit of collective contention.

Such distinctions would be helpful in untangling a conversation about terrorism that, many years since 9/11, remains fundamentally flawed. The West still engages in interminable discussions of whether “terrorism works,” while often failing to discern the necessary relation between terrorist acts and the broader strategy at hand (for example, Abrahms, 2006), or between the agential use of terrorism and the structural context in which it unfolds (Hoffman, 2014, and, for the critique, Segev, 2015). The confused nature of the debate was evident in President Barack Obama’s bold assertion, in September 2014, that the Islamic State “is a terrorist organization, pure and simple” (“Transcript: President Obama’s Speech on Combating ISIS,” 2014). Perhaps not intended for academic evaluation, the statement nonetheless

betrays dangerously incorrect analysis (after all, this “terrorist organization” was then mobilizing thousands of recruits and governing a significant counter-state). Similar confusion abounds at the State Department, whose list of “designated terrorist organization” forces together a whole array of outfits on the basis of their one shared tactic, stripped of context. At present, the list involves not just governments (Hamas) but Maoist insurgents (Communist Party of the Philippines and *Sendero Luminoso* or Shining Path) and defunct cults (*Aum Shinrikyo*) (see “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” n.d.). True, the carnage of a terrorist act will look alike regardless of the group responsible, but analysis and response cannot proceed without careful consideration of strategic function, political legitimacy, and broader circumstance. Without this type of interrogation, the term *terrorism* is barely useful.

Examples may illustrate the point. At one end stands Anders Breivik, the Norwegian far-right terrorist who in one day killed 77 people, mostly children. His strategy, as such, was limited to one day of terrorist acts and the exploitation of the platform thus earned to market his political manifesto (Gardell, 2014). The U.S.-based Weather Underground employed a similar, yet less lethal, approach over a longer time, and never evolved past its periodic tantrums against society. By force or by choice, terrorist actors such as these are engaging only in violence—there are no lines of effort, only a self-standing campaign of terrorism supported by minor efforts at propaganda, fundraising, and the like. Politically isolated and unable to mobilize the very society they seek to change, these actors are forced into a state of “clandestinity” so as to evade arrest (Della Porta, 2006). For law-enforcement authorities, the challenge lies in finding the needle in a haystack, but once located it can be removed without leaving much of a trace.

This type of terrorism is quite incomparable with the violence visited upon society by groups such as FMLN, FARC, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), or—most recently—the Islamic State. These groups also use terrorism, but typically to shape the battlefield for political action. Kydd and Walter (2006) identify five functions for such terrorism: (1) attrition, (2) intimidation, (3) provocation, (4) spoiling, and (5) outbidding. As they explain (p. 51), attrition means persuading the enemy of your superior strength, intimidation demonstrates a capability to punish, provocation seeks to induce an indiscriminate response, whereas spoiler attacks and outbidding, in different ways, discredit more moderate rivals to the group. Quite often, the attacks themselves are incidental to the broader political project being purposed and, therefore, a significant portion of the population may even see them as wholly legitimate. Elsewhere, it may be that the insurgent group is not supported, but that the state is absent or in such a sorry state as to leave no option but joining the rebellion. Either way, this context is sufficiently critical that one must take issue with Khalil’s argument (2013) that distinguishing

between terrorists and insurgents is futile. Indeed, this distinction has profound implications for the response: Are those causing unrest a self-contained squad or, more worryingly, the vanguard of a mass movement?

As a third insight, the placement of terrorism conceptually as a campaign within a violent LOE comprised also of other campaigns suggests correctly that supposedly *irregular* and *regular* forms of violence can and will be blended. The framework anticipates that *terrorism*—the non-state use of violence against the innocent for the purpose of political communication—often occurs alongside and simultaneous to *guerrilla warfare* and even *mobile warfare* or *war of position*. Historically speaking, there is nothing aberrant about such combinations. Guerrilla warfare, in this context, distinguishes itself through the targeting of the coercive or administrative instruments of the state but by forces that eschew the regulations of war (no uniform, no “fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance” (Military Commissions Act, 2006)) so as to achieve an element of surprise (Walzer, 2015, p. 180). Mobile warfare is the opportunistic use of regular forces to destroy and demoralize main-force units without necessarily seizing territory—key examples include the tactical efforts of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) against the United States in the 1965–1973 period. War of position, finally, signals an escalation in ambition and intent, namely to seize and hold territory as in conventional warfare, illustrative of a situation of civil war. In the Vietnam War, war of position was seen three times: the Tet Offensive of January–February 1968, the Spring 1972 “Easter Offensive,” and the Spring 1975 offensive, which saw the fall of South Vietnam. In these cases, enemy regiments, divisions, and even corps-equivalents were utilized, with terror and guerrilla action assuming the role of supporting special operations (see Marks-authored chapter in Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2004, pp. 1–1 to 1–11). The objective was to seize and hold territory (with attendant population).

By placing these campaigns within one conceptual LOE, this framework recognizes the high likelihood of so-called hybrid challenges. Such phenomena should not surprise, as it has been a cardinal assumption within insurgent theory for centuries that initial guerrilla and terroristic action will graduate eventually to more regular forms of violence; further, that these will unfold both tangibly and intangibly, on the ground and in the mind. To return to Vietnam, this diversity of violent attack is what made the American dilemma so formidable: The United States faced a shadowy insurgent network but also the main forces of the Viet Cong and the NVA (Andrade, 2008). And yet, despite significant scholarship on the conflict, this complexity is often missed in favor of the two-dimensional and preconceived archetype of an “insurgency” limited to low-intensity and small-scale violence. Similarly, the denouement in Sri Lanka’s struggle against the LTTE is often framed as a brutal if effective “counterinsurgency” victory, when a more accurate

portrayal would acknowledge the Tigers' state-like military apparatus and techniques and, hence, the civil-war nature of the conflict (Marks & Brar, 2016).

By the same token, the violent LOE as constructed above also invites reflection on the tendency of states, traditionally thought to employ only campaigns of conventional warfare, to engage in guerrilla attacks or, through proxies, in terrorism. Indeed, in Ukraine in 2014, Russian military and intelligence forces were covertly engaged to enable, arm, and assist local activists and fighters in seizing territory and buildings from the government (Higgins, Gordon, & Kramer, 2014). This practice, which in the KGB handbook would be called *maskirovka*—or disguised warfare—is not new. As Galeotti (2016) notes, both the Spetsnaz and the NKVD were “tasked with covertly training, mobilizing, supporting and leading irregular forces.” This has also been the approach adopted by Iran and Pakistan, whose respective sponsorship of proxies—both insurgent and terroristic—has extended their influence regionally (Byman, 2008; Fair, 2014; Jones, 2012). Rather than dismiss this approach as aberrational—or deploying new jargon to accommodate it within an inadequate dichotomy—the framework above treats as normal the combination, by both state and non-state actors, of regulated and unregulated violent campaigns to achieve their political ends.

The fourth insight lies in the arrangement of the violent LOE alongside four others that have little if anything to do with *armed* coercion. In this manner, the framework encourages a way of thinking about war that sees outright violence as *constitutive* rather than dominant. It is critical to engage with questions of how and why violence is used, but analysis should not lose sight of the broader forms of action that can in themselves or in combination with violence serve the ends of policy: that is, governance, alliance-building, “non-violence” (or “political warfare,” to include subversion, lawfare, and information warfare), and internationalization. In other words, the framework recognizes that, in politics, victory belongs not to the strongest army or the best argument but to the best practitioner of the art. This view displaces violence from the central analytical place it so often enjoys within strategic studies and creates space for other lines of effort, their interplay, and their essential relation to the overall objective.

Several authors have already focused on the use of politics, service-delivery, charity, and outreach by armed organizations as extensions of their operational art (see e.g., Flanigan, 2006; Grynkeiwich, 2008; Mampilly, 2015). Yet in the public imagination, these actors are all too commonly defined by what they do violently. Most accounts of insurgency are written within defense and security institutions or by authors with a specific interest in military affairs, and tend therefore to privilege the *violent* competition. The threat of insurgency is also often defined by the security challenge that it represents, through the use of terrorism or guerrilla warfare, and thus the use of force,

rather than its political purpose—and its other expressions—assumes a central analytical place. Finally, more than anything, it is the use of violence that offends and threatens state authority, and so the discussion and response tend to home in on this dimension. By inviting contemplation of violence as only one possible expression of collective contention, the above framework provides a broader lens.

Such a lens is increasingly relevant as both state and non-state actors shy away from stark expressions of coercion in favor of still potent but less flagrant exercises of power. On the insurgent side, an early yet telling example was the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico—perhaps the world’s first network-enabled insurgency (or *netwar*, as per Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1996). This group quickly and strategically abandoned its violent LOE following a massive Mexican military deployment in early 1995 and instead waged war “by other means.” The Zapatistas were able to challenge state legitimacy by embedding their struggle in a network of global civil-society and non-governmental organizations, all of which deployed (both in Chiapas and abroad) to “bear witness” to the stand-off with the Mexican government. The Zapatistas eroded the strategic significance of the state’s undeniable military superiority by forcing the struggle onto a global stage where raw expressions of force were too politically costly to be used. The internationalization was overwhelmingly a consequence of networks made robust by globalization, as frames and narratives were bridged between the local plight of indigenous actors in Chiapas and various, globally distributed anti-establishment, anti-modernity, pro-indigenous movements (Lindholm & Zúquete, 2010, pp. 11–21). By exploiting alternative lines of effort in this manner, the EZLN sustained their counter-state, *Los Autodenominados Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas* (MAREZ), with the government incapable of mounting an effective response, military or otherwise (Alschuler, 2014; Bob, 2005).

Nepal provides a more recent yet equally illuminating example, not least given that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has achieved what no other Maoist group in Asia has accomplished since the Vietnam War: success. The Maoists engaged in violence, blending terrorism (to ensure compliance and remove key individuals), guerrilla warfare (to attack state targets or reinforce the political cadre), mobile warfare (beginning in November 2001, to neutralize the Royal Nepalese Army), and war of position (to first carve out district-size base areas, then increasingly to build an entire counter-state that held 70–80% of the population by 2005). Despite this sophisticated use of force, the group realized in 2005 that the violent LOE had culminated and that political power—the objective—would be more realistically achieved by emphasizing other lines of effort. A strategy session in September 2005 decided upon the shift: a political LOE consolidated support in the base areas, an alliance LOE built a united front against the increasingly isolated

monarchy, a non-violent LOE exploited the widespread war-fatigue, and an international LOE ensured other states put pressure on the government to recognize the Maoists as a legitimate party for the sake of “peace” (while cutting off necessary lethal aid to Kathmandu). The shift led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006, which granted the Maoists an opportunity, fully exploited, to combine party politics with continued covert terrorism—frequently less lethal, but still brutal—to solidify its position and win parliamentary votes. In the turbulent post-war context, the Maoists were able to control elections and seize power (Marks, 2007b, pp. 297–352, 2017, p. 85).

Though in Nepal intervening variables prevented the Maoists’ ultimate consolidation of power, it was a near-run thing. A similar approach in Bolivia, however, exploiting an analogous set of national and regional circumstances, succeeded in placing a drug-funded insurgency in power (Spencer & Melgar, 2017). Regardless of specific outcomes, this blending of legality and illegality, especially within democratic (though flawed) polities, appears to be a new norm among insurgents. Other than the Islamic State’s growth into a conventional fighting force in 2014, there are few examples since LTTE’s defeat of a group going toe-to-toe with the organized units of a state’s military. Groups appear aware that the state will typically retain proficiency in conventional combat, but, conversely, that the challenger holds an advantage in less advanced forms of violence—and that terrorism and guerrilla operations can be force multipliers even in “peace-time.” Further, the international community’s professed intolerance of violence as a mechanism of political change—reflected in often sanctimonious statements at international fora—may also be compelling insurgent groups wishing to form part of this club to adopt more discreet repertoires, so as to avoid being sanctioned as war-mongers (only a flagrantly millenarian force such as Islamic State would welcome the charge).

The point here is that the objective remains political, not military, and may therefore be more readily achieved through non-military approaches: by staying just under the threshold that justifies a severe domestic backlash and international censure, by using the rhetoric of “peace” and “democracy” to tear the guts out of both. Indeed, the growing prevalence of just this approach explains the very real concern over FARC’s supposed transition from a military struggle it had lost to a political contest in which, at one point, it would have been given precisely what it had failed to achieve by military means (Ospina, Marks, & Ucko, 2016).

What is both fascinating and of enormous concern is that this emerging insurgent approach is mirrored by the so-called Gerasimov Doctrine employed by Russia. The Gerasimov Doctrine is neither doctrine nor the intellectual creation only of General Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, the former Russian chief of general staff, but it does provide the main coherent theorization of the approach used by Putin in the Near Abroad—in

Ukraine, Georgia, Estonia, and elsewhere. Elaborating on what in the West most commonly would be termed “gray zone” operations, Gerasimov’s article acknowledges, even emphasizes, the brackish interplay of war and peace and the relative advantages of appearing non-violent in achieving political goals. It deserves to be quoted at length:

It would be easiest of all to say that the events of the “Arab Spring” are not war and so there are no lessons for us—military men—to learn. But maybe the opposite is true—that precisely these events are typical of warfare in the twenty-first century. In terms of the scale of the casualties and destruction, the catastrophic social, economic, and political consequences, such new-type conflicts are comparable with the consequences of any real war. The very “rules of war” have changed. The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness. The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures—applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population. All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special-operations-forces. The open use of forces—often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation—is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict. (Gerasimov, 2013)

Whether this is, as held by some, a sign of a broader strategic shift, affecting both state and non-state actors, it is one that this framework can shed light upon so as to create a more effective counter.

Constructing a counter-strategy

The final benefit of the analytical framework above is that it provides an approach for constructing an effective response to nontraditional challenges. By identifying the lines of effort and mapping out the campaigns, even sub-campaigns, of a threat strategy, a set of “targets” is identified that must in some way be addressed in coordinated fashion by one’s own counter-strategy. If an adversary is engaging in a campaign of terrorism, a campaign of counter-terrorism is required—this much is clear. Yet by identifying the specific sub-campaigns of this conceptual campaign of terrorism, the state is provided with more precise priorities for its own counter-terrorism effort. If the group is attacking the people to discredit the government, the state must establish population security to retain its legitimacy. If the group cripples government efforts by targeting critical infrastructure, or dignitaries, or cultural icons, counter-actions should negate the effect of these specific efforts.

By the same token, if the group is found to engage in a LOE of domestic alliance-building, the state should ensure that it negates the strategic benefit drawn from the constituent campaigns, plausibly by engaging or co-opting

said allies all while raising the costs of associating with the group. If a group is internationalizing the struggle to create legitimacy for itself and its cause at the expense of the government, diplomatic and other international efforts will be required to cut off or otherwise address flows of support, both tangible and intangible. If the group is found to engage in campaigns of subversion, lawfare, protest, and propaganda as part of a non-violent LOE, the government cannot content itself with attacking the violent expressions of the strategy but must itself resource and operationalize an effective response that addresses this particular articulation of the problem. Most fundamentally, if the group is mobilizing a population through a political LOE, the government should concern itself intimately with the drivers of alienation and the roots of its own illegitimacy.

Put this way, it all seems painfully obvious, yet too often governments miss critical components of their adversary's strategy, typically because of a near-exclusive focus on its use of violence. Partial responses such as these can be counter-productive. As one example, a thorough examination of the gangs in Rio's *favelas* reveals a strategy that, albeit guided by profit and violence, also relies on the cooperation and consent of the local community. Thus Comando Vermelho (CV), Brazil's oldest criminal group, uses campaigns of guerrilla warfare (to force the state out) and of terrorism (to enforce local compliance) but also a political LOE to provide basic state functions, including governance, taxation, arbitration, and the supply of services (Arias & Rodrigues, 2006). In such manner, the gang gains local legitimacy, and, as the state is absent, it gradually comes to be seen by these "failed communities" as their protector and representative (Sullivan, 2013). Meanwhile, the group also engages in a non-violent LOE aimed at corrupting, influencing, and subverting Rio's politics, thereby ensuring its freedom of maneuver (even in prisons, where it conducts its business largely unimpeded) (Dowdney, 2003, p. 53).

Rather than engage with the five questions above, rather than map and respond to the full breadth of the gang's strategy, the government policy in this instance, as in so many others, has concentrated overwhelmingly on law enforcement and cracking down on violent behavior. Even when in 2008 Rio's government implemented a pacification strategy based on the counterinsurgency principles of providing security and out-governing the enemy, the program never tasked state agencies beyond the police with its execution (Stanford CDDRL, 2014). Security operations disrupted gang operations, but therefore also disrupted the rudimentary yet important public services that it provided. The population then looked to the police to provide water, electricity, and waste removal, producing a gap between expectations and performance that swiftly eroded state legitimacy (Stanford CDDRL, 2015). Similarly, the new strategy did little to address the problem of corruption, which was providing loopholes for the gang, or its total penetration of

Rio's over-crowded prisons, producing *in toto* an approach doomed to fail (Ramos da Cruz & Ucko, 2018).

There are many such examples—and counter-examples where interrogation of strategy on the terms presented above has allowed for notable success. Efforts to counter the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone prior to 2000 failed to acknowledge the group's strategic reliance on internationalization, specifically its relation with Charles Taylor and its control and smuggling of diamonds, which sustained RUF operations. Yet following a rigorous estimate of the situation that correctly identified the full breadth of RUF's strategy, a regional, politico-military effort was made to isolate Liberia politically and logistically, to bolster the legitimacy and functioning of Sierra Leone's government and security forces, and to deny the RUF access to its diamond fields so as to close off its smuggling routes (Ucko, 2016, pp. 856, 863). The effort accurately and in detail captured the nature of the RUF's strategy and offered a sequenced course of action addressing both local and regional drivers of violence.

In the canonical counterinsurgency case of Malaya, Britain's response to the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) initially failed to acknowledge the group's use of political and non-violent lines of effort to gain and sustain the support of the Chinese squatter population. Early counterinsurgency operations were focused on rooting out the "bandits" or "terrorists" and tended to push the Chinese population into the arms of the enemy, allowing it to hide and regenerate. It was only after a re-evaluation of the strategy, in 1951, that lines of effort were put in place to deny the MNLA the opportunity to govern, coerce, and manipulate this support base, through mass relocation but also the co-option of the Chinese squatters as regular citizens of a democratic Malaya (Hack, 2009; Ucko, 2010a, 2017). It was in this manner that the campaign became the success-story we know it as today.

A vital advantage in constructing counter-strategies in this manner is that the mapping of necessary actions also suggests the requisite *means* for their execution. For instance, Colombia's largely successful Democratic Security Policy, formulated in 2002–2003, resulted in the creation of means to respond specifically to FARC's operational art. Having identified FARC's use of mobility corridors across the Andes as a key element of its violent LOE, for instance, Colombia formed and deployed special "high mountain battalions" to block such movement. Likewise, having discerned FARC's use of remote regions as a "strategic rear-guard" to recover, recruit, and prepare, Bogotá fielded mobile brigades to achieve sustained pressure throughout the countryside (Ospina & Marks, 2014, p. 366). Simultaneously, to secure the population that FARC had coerced into its system, local security forces—*Soldados de mi Pueblo*—were established, so that, within years, these 40-man units, trained, armed, and equipped as regular soldiers and officered by regulars, were present in nearly 600 locations. To mobilize vulnerable

populations and win the competition of legitimacy necessary for success, the government created security councils (*Consejos de Seguridad*) and local governance councils (*Consejos Comunales de Gobierno*) that became integral in empowering democracy and hence state power (Marks, 2006, 210; Ospina & Marks, 2014, p. 365). Without specific and specialized *means*, tailored to the situation, the best intentions go unfulfilled.

For the West, this focus on means should force serious consideration of the resource imbalance between our military and non-military instruments of power, compounded by the aforementioned failure to unify command and effort. Looking specifically at the latest U.S. engagements with irregular warfare, it quickly becomes clear that the country lacks the deployable civilian capabilities necessary to address the breadth of strategic challenges faced (Collins, 2015, p. 62; Lamb & Franco, 2015, p. 208). Funding and resourcing for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—the most expeditionary of civilian government bodies—have remained lackluster. By way of illustration, the USAID deployment to the Vietnam War was bigger than the entire organization is today. The State Department, meanwhile, despite many attempted reforms, lacks a sizable operational capability or a standing structure to enable a comprehensive response to political violence (Greentree, 2013, p. 341; Hegland, 2007). As a result, the U.S. response to irregular threats—*political* challenges—remains predominantly military (lip-service to coordination notwithstanding). Even when the military makes gains, it remains a “moon without a planet to orbit” (Sewell, 2007, p. xl).

The above approach is in itself unlikely to overcome such shortcomings but it may form the basis of a response by fostering the necessary type of analysis. In seeking unity of action, institutional barriers are raised at various intersections covered by the framework, stemming from internal politics, cultural practices, and service rivalries. By putting violence in context, by explicitly positioning the military in its supporting relation to strategy, frameworks such as the one presented invites consideration of the need to integrate and coordinate, under a type of leadership capable of welding all instruments of the state into a coherent response.

Conclusion

What has been presented here is little more than the operationalization of the most basic reality there is in war: The enemy gets a vote. Today, the task of constructing responses to strategic threats has too often fallen into the error of fielding a template for victory that is driven by ideological or technological concerns rather than an actual estimate of the situation. One could speculate how we have come to such a point, but this is not necessary. The key is that the enemies of the present world order, whether international, regional, or national

(to include local), have discerned the weakness of our war-fighting posture. Unless defeat is accepted as a desirable outcome, this demands reform.

The approach presented here offers an intellectual blueprint for such reform. Rather than front-load the analytical process with answers, it begins with five questions. These questions, if used for careful interrogation of the threat, correct many of the cognitive shortcomings of present-day analysis and policy. Rather than detach military and security affairs from their political purpose, they force close consideration of their intimate relation. Rather than bifurcate artificially between state and non-state uses of force, they anticipate a blending of styles and of modes of violence to achieve a political effect. Rather than let the use of violence, or of terrorism, eclipse the broader strategy at play, they compel a comprehensive analysis of wide-ranging lines of effort and their interaction. It is through careful engagement with these questions, and the construction of an effective counter-strategy, that we do better in the challenge at hand.

That challenge, it must be noted, is neither democratic nor bound by the artificial divisions which have driven so much of our warfighting thought since the Cold War. It neither sees legitimacy as the underlying driving force for societal cohesion nor is concerned with minimization of collateral damage. It has discerned, though, that both of these aspects are central to our way of war—at least normatively. This has driven the fielding of approaches that combine kinetic and nonkinetic facets of conflict in a manner that strikes directly at our weak points. The consequence is that in both irregular and regular confrontation, we flounder. Simply recognizing the parameters of the business at hand is not a panacea, but it is a necessary first step.

Ironically, critics of the recognition that we are involved in a “long war” have adopted “endless war” to describe misguided commitment and application of force. As evident from the framework presented above, this misses the mark. Whatever one calls 21st century warfare, it indeed has a temporal dimension deliberately included to induce weariness in democratic societies. Certainly errors of strategy and its components must be avoided, but it is impossible to ignore that contemporary challengers have designed their own approaches to speak directly to our desire to avoid what Mao labeled *protracted war*. How to respond will require further treatment, but the indispensable starting-point is analytical honesty and terminological precision. On that basis, there must be a new counter.

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