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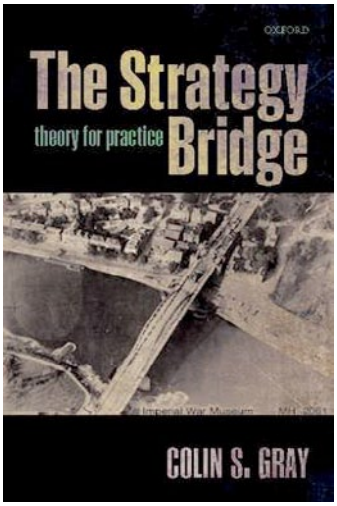
A Note From The Editor

Dear IJ Subscribers,

Welcome to the Second Issue of Infinity Journal (IJ). As you are well aware, we launched the first issue of IJ just three months ago and the response has been extremely positive. We have received strong compliments and appreciation from professionals in government, soldiers, practitioners, academics, and students, all thanking us for building a true strategy publication. We want to thank all of you for your support and we look forward bringing you each new issue.

In this new issue, we are proud to present an article by Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria II, Director of Research at the U.S. Army War College. Other authors in this issue include Dr. Eitan Shamir of the Office of the Prime Minister (Israel), Dr. Simon Anglim of the University of Reading (UK), as well as Danny Steed of the University of Reading, Tom Wein of Strategic Communication Laboratories, and yours truly, William F. Owen, Senior Editor of Infinity Journal.

As an Editor, I have to accept that few folks ever actually read the Editorial. However, hopefully the inclusion of this picture will have caught your eye.



It is not the policy of Infinity Journal to publish book reviews. The reasons for this are many, but basically most book reviews lack honesty and merit, and so for those reasons, the editorial team here at Infinity Journal will lay our cards plainly on the table.

We like Colin Gray. We think you should read everything he writes and everyone here at Infinity Journal owes Professor Gray a huge debt in terms of how his writing has schooled him or her in thinking and writing about strategy.

In his most recent work *The Strategy Bridge*, Professor Gray has provided a snap shot on the scale of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, of where his many years of study and teaching have lead him. This is a book designed as theory for practice. OK, but this begs the great strategic question, "so what?" The "so what" is that there are very, very few competent teachers or writers on strategy. It therefore makes sense to read what little, that is good, is written on the subject. Moreover what Gray has provided here is more than ample as a base line work for anyone who wishes to get serious about strategy. Thus, it would be all too easy to now say what an excellent book this is.

However, we will not say this is an excellent book. We just want to tell our readers to read it and read it more than once. If you work in an area where strategy is relevant, then you should force others to read the book, because this book provides good access to where the modern strategy debate currently stands, in terms of how one of the few competent (and even eminent) men in this field views it. *The Strategy Bridge* provides a comprehensive and apparently agenda free discussion on strategy. This work does not try and sell an "indirect approach" or a "kinder way of war." It is what it is.

While the Infinity Journal team may be unashamedly fans of Professor Gray, it would be very wrong to say we are un-questioning. This book begs many questions and it would be unlikely that anyone would agree with all that is contained therein. Nevertheless, right now it is clearly a book fit for recommendation by the staff at Infinity Journal, assuming that readers are already comfortable with Clausewitz and Thucydides.

Read *The Strategy Bridge*. It's good and clear, but not always easy, because strategy is clearly not something everybody gets. If you don't read *The Strategy Bridge* in the next year or so, then the chances are that strategy isn't something you care about too much, and you're going to be out of your depth in the discussions that follow.

NOTE: The primary and overwhelming reason for rejecting articles submitted to Infinity Journal for publication is that writers do not understand what strategy is. Our recommendation: keep working at it and always feel free to resubmit. After all, we want to see your work on strategy published, not rejected.

William F. Owen
Senior Editor, Infinity Journal

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Reconsidering War's Logic and Grammar

Antulio J. Echevarria II

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Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria II is the Director of Research for the U.S. Army War College. He has over 20 years experience in the U.S. Army, having served in a number of command and staff assignments, and has held a NATO Fulbright. He is the author of *Clausewitz* and Contemporary War, among many other works. Dr. Echevarria is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Army War College, and holds a Master's and Doctorate in history from Princeton University.

The re-emergence of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine within the U.S. military and the apparent, if tentative, success of that doctrine thus far in Iraq and Afghanistan have given rise to an intense debate among defense scholars. One side of the debate argues that the leading proponents of COIN, the so-called 'COIN-dinistas,' are giving the doctrine too much credit for recent successes by misrepresenting the causes of the Anbar Awakening and the effects of the 'Surge,' while deliberately downplaying the role of enemy-centric measures in containing the insurgencies. The COIN-dinistas, for their part, maintain that their opponents, the so-called 'COIN-tras,' are simply refusing to acknowledge that the population-centric approach is effective, that it can be replicated elsewhere with appropriate adjustments for different cultures; and that, in short, the capabilities associated with COIN are the long-sought answers to the challenges posed by the 'new' wars of the twenty-first century. This last claim, in particular, has led to a number of complaints by defense scholars that tactics are (once again) driving U.S. strategy; or, as some have recently argued, the obsession with applying a specific military 'grammar' is undermining, or supplanting entirely, the 'logic' of employing it in the first place.[i] Indeed, this complaint is not without merit; for the rhetoric of the COIN-dinistas suggests that the optimal grand strategy consists of stringing a series of counterinsurgency campaigns together.

While the debate will likely continue for some time, perhaps even well after the outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan have been thoroughly assessed, the reference to COIN as a form of military grammar is an interesting one. COIN, both as a doctrine (as embodied in US FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5) and as a corpus of theory, has been referred to elsewhere as war's second grammar precisely because its proponents often define it, perhaps too simplistically, in direct contrast to the principles and procedures associated with an enemy-centric or combat-centric approach to war. Moreover, the logic-grammar analogy is an enormously popular one today, despite the fact that Clausewitz used it only once in *On War*—some two-hundred years ago—when he stated that war has 'its own grammar, but not its own logic.'[ii] Presumably, this sentence means that, while armed conflict may have any number of fundamental principles, these function more like the rules of grammar in written and oral communications, than the laws of logic that give purpose and meaning to the overall exchange. Today, the analogy has become a convenient way to express what many see as the military's proper relationship to political authority, and it appears to support the normative argument that war's aims ought to remain subordinate to policy's goals.

the logic-grammar analogy is an enormously popular one today, despite the fact that Clausewitz used it only once in On War

The recent references to logic and grammar in the COIN debate, combined with the analogy's long-standing popularity, suggest that a reconsideration of its utility and its limits is in order. That is the aim here. Although problematic in many respects, the analogy does have utility as a form of intellectual shorthand to represent the relationship between political imperatives, such as multilateral restraint as exercised during the Cold War, and military principles, such as mass or concentration. It can, in fact, assist in refocusing attention on some of the fissures that exist both *between* and *within* strategic and operational studies, not because it bridges them, per se, but because it exposes them for further research and study. As any scholar would admit, some underlying tensions or dynamics are invariably glossed over for the sake of weaving a coherent narrative, especially in the case of

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The principal problem with using the logic-grammar analogy is the gap that exists between what he said and what we believe he meant.

historical studies covering a broad span of time. Because the analogy can serve as the lens that brings some of those tensions into sharper focus, it is a useful tool for considering arguments pertaining to the interface between strategic and operational thinking, of which the COIN debate is but one example. [iii]

The principal problem with using the logic-grammar analogy, as with most of Clausewitz's expressions, is the gap that exists between what he said, which is not always clear, and what we believe he meant. However, given that a large portion of *On War* is a discussion of armed conflict's inner workings and fundamental principles, interpreting the analogy as shorthand for the relationship between political imperatives and military principles is eminently defensible. A second, but equally important problem with the analogy is that it can insinuate another level of abstraction into a field already rich in them. This drawback can be minimized if the analogy remains shorthand, and is not forced to become an alternative (and highly problematic) analytical framework the way 'strategic culture' has been.

War's Logic and Grammar: What We Know

Logic is generally defined as the set of rules that govern reasoning, which is also the definition used in Clausewitz's day. With respect to armed conflict, it can be likened to the accepted set of imperatives, principles, or customs governing political intercourse, all of which shape the conceptual limits of strategy. These limits, in turn, influence how the purpose of a conflict is defined, how the scale of the effort is settled upon, and how the level of violence is decided. However, logic is clearly not strategy, which is commonly defined as the sum of linking ends, ways, and means. Just as Clausewitz observed that each historical era has its own theory of war, so too the major powers in each era can be said to have generally followed certain political imperatives—whether developed unilaterally or derived from international treaties or alliances—which underpin their strategies, and around, or within which their key military principles must operate. Also, such political imperatives emerge and change in part due to what is known about the potential consequences of employing military power.

Grammar is typically defined as the collection of rules that govern oral and written communications. With respect to war, it can be thought of as the military principles, rules, or procedures that govern the use of armed force. Grammar is, thus, both more and less than military means: it is not the hardware, nor its capacity for violence, as much as it is the accepted guidelines regarding its use. Explicit rules of grammar can be found in most forms of military doctrine, including the much debated 'principles of war' or 'principles of operations'. However, grammar also consists of tacit rules, such as seizing the initiative or deferring to the judgment of the forward commander, which are cultivated by numerous traditions and put into practice by military institutions. Logistical requirements also impose material limitations on grammar, forcing it in some cases to be rewritten entirely.

Logic also frequently obliges grammar to accept additional rules, either to restrict the application of several of its principles or to expand their scope. However, there is typically a counterforce of sorts at work because ignoring or finessing too many of the rules of grammar increases the risk that the desired message will fail, no matter how sound the logic. Principles of grammar can also influence or shape logic by creating expectations about what war is, and what it can or cannot accomplish, and at what cost. In many historical situations, these expectations were more or less in line with what could be achieved; but in others they were clearly not. The latter case was spectacularly illustrated by how quickly the unilateralist impulse in neoconservative thinking at the beginning of the new millennium was drawn to the so-called 'new' American way of war as a transformative instrument, as a means for putting democratic peace theory into effect. It is also clear that military institutions will attempt to apply what they believe are the most critical principles of grammar, and sometimes will do so quite aggressively, whenever political imperatives appear indistinct or incomprehensible to them, or seem in their eyes to violate the 'true' nature of war. The influence between logic and grammar is, in other words, reciprocal, even when the two are not necessarily in accord.

Grammar is, thus, both more and less than military means

In short, if policy and war are indeed indissolubly linked, then they are likely connected where, and in much the same way, as logic and grammar are joined. Logic and grammar are found in any conflict, no matter how brief or primitive, and no matter how consummately or incompetently waged. The logic-grammar analogy is merely the microscope that helps isolate the tension behind that linkage and bring it into sharper relief.

War's Logic and Grammar: What We Stand to Learn

This sharper focus can augment the field of defense studies by bringing to light dynamics that lie at the edge of the definitional limits of its two primary lines of inquiry—strategy and operational art. Each of these is more or less healthy, as evidenced by the quality of recent contributions, such as Colin Gray's *The Strategy Bridge* and Beatrice Heuser's *The Evolution of Strategy*, as well as *The Evolution of Operational Art*, edited by John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld. [iv] From a practical standpoint, the bifurcation along two lines of inquiry makes sense: strategy and operational art are complex and developed enough to warrant separate fields of study. Moreover, with respect to professional military education, students at war colleges need to understand what strategy is, while students at staff colleges must learn how to plan and conduct operations. Thus, the split is justified: research efforts parallel the division of labor with respect to teaching.

strategy and operational art are complex and developed enough to warrant separate fields of study

Still, both lines of inquiry are necessarily limited by the fact that their subjects are almost too well defined. Strategy is taught as a sequential process involving the identification of ends, their alignment with means, followed by decisions concerning the ways that link means to ends. Operational art begins with the presumption that operations were, or were intended to be, linked together as part of a larger campaign, which was, in turn, to complement a general military strategy. However, the rub is that studying strategy involves more art than science whenever strategic processes are too informal to be worthy of the name, which is not infrequently the case. Similarly, the literature on operational art does not adequately cover critical topics, such as stability and reconstruction operations, the very activities whereby, some would claim, wars are really won; nor does it give much attention to cases where the 'artwork' reduces to the blunt arithmetic of attrition. The term operational science would seem more appropriate, the protests of young officers notwithstanding. Again, these cases are too numerous to be called exceptions. In contrast, political imperatives are usually to be found even when a formal strategy has not been formulated; military principles are often being followed, even if their application is not in the least artistic. Thus, the logic-grammar lens is useful even in situations where the main lines of inquiry are thin. It does not replace either one, but rather serves as a point of reference for discussing the dynamics that informed political expectations and shaped military planning.

As such, the logic-grammar prism can facilitate consideration of some of the assumptions underpinning contemporary strategy debates. While most scholars would agree that grammar influences logic as much as logic shapes grammar, this understanding is not apparent in many of the current debates, particularly the row over COIN doctrine. Indeed, the tone is quite the opposite. The COIN-tras assume that grammar's influence is something to be minimized, that it is improper or out of order; while the COIN-dinistas assume that a set of 'proven' operational principles is the missing link in a strategy that is otherwise ready to execute.

No doubt, this assumption stems, in part, from the tendency to see Clausewitz's observation that 'war has its own grammar, but not its own logic' as normative. *On War*, though, is a blend of descriptive and normative observations, which Clausewitz referred to as objective and subjective, respectively. To be sure, the distinction between the two is not always clear; and there is certainly a normative argument in Book VIII, Chapter 6B, 'War is an Instrument of Policy'. This is that war planners ought to put political objectives foremost in their calculations so that political purposes are not set aside for the sake of military aims. However, the phrase is also unquestionably descriptive in that it expresses the relationship between war's principles and procedures with respect to the larger context of political practices. The sense it conveys is that this relationship is an objective fact, and would not—indeed could not—be altered whether military objectives are in line with political ones, or whether a civilian or a military government is running the war. The exchange takes place regardless, and it is ultimately political in nature. In short, the normative concern over the proper relationship between political purposes and military aims has obscured the objective description of the linkage between logic, as political imperatives, and grammar, as operational principles.

Accordingly, grammar's influence is hardly improper; it is, in fact, unavoidable: discussing what should be done goes hand in hand with considering what can be done. The real problem lies less in the influence than in the failure to distinguish between the two. The question is not whether grammar should influence logic, but rather which grammar should. In fact, the argument that grammar is driving logic is an admission that COIN principles have a certain attractive power with respect to the existing political imperative to protect the homeland, and despite the egregious costs of putting those principles into practice. Attempting to prevent or limit that attraction is in many ways a fool's errand, unless another grammar with comparable drawing power is offered in its place. The problem with the existing alternative—the so-called counter-terrorism approach—is that it does not have the same attraction because it requires accepting the probability that terrorist groups will reconstitute at some point, somewhere, and that they will eventually launch a successful attack against the United States or one of its allies. The cruise missile strikes against al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and Sudan 1998 are a case in point; a counter-terrorism approach which looks like that and accomplishes just as much is singularly unattractive. Of course, the risks are also the same and just as high with the COIN approach; but these have been skillfully obscured by a steady flow of rhetoric claiming that establishing local security and governance will prevent the return of terrorists, as if going elsewhere is not an option for them. Only one failure is needed to disprove that.

The exchange takes place regardless, and it is ultimately political in nature.

In many ways, the COIN debate reflects an uneven practice on the ground. The grammar that is actually being employed in Iraq and Afghanistan is a compound one, shaped less by conflicting principles than shifting (though not mutually exclusive) priorities: (1) destruction of hostile forces and (2) protection of the indigenous population. As several studies show, many of the skills required to fight so-called traditional wars are the same as those required to defeat insurgencies. The key competency is understanding when and how to shift priorities—a skill that doctrine can facilitate, but, not surprisingly, requires considerable experience. As far as logic is concerned, the imperative to protect the homeland still holds enormous power, even a decade after 9/11. Any alternative grammar will have to address that more directly, and more persuasively, and preferably sooner rather than later.

In sum, the logic-grammar analogy is useful as a form of intellectual shorthand, and its chief value lies in what it draws attention to—the dynamic interface between political imperatives and operational principles. A detailed history of war's logic and grammar, for instance, would prove quite difficult to scope, and might well result in forfeiting the

analogy's principal value in the process: it is more useful as a precision strike than a prolonged campaign. Also, as mentioned earlier, a discipline already embarrassed by a richness of abstract concepts is not likely to welcome yet another one. In other words, the analogy ought not to be elevated to the level of a theory, but instead used as a reminder to challenge our assumptions, which would in turn clearly benefit the larger discipline of defense studies.

In many ways, the COIN debate reflects an uneven practice on the ground.

Nonetheless, the stimulative value of this particular shorthand should not be discounted. Indeed, it could well encourage scholars to ask new questions: Is the relationship between policy and war truly indissoluble? To what extent do the laws of logic depend on the structure that grammar provides? How closely connected is war's political logic to its military grammar? How often does logic change in the course of a war? In which periods, or in which kinds of wars, was the change more frequent or more significant than in others? How often does grammar change and which factors are most responsible? How have apparently new domains, such as cyberwar and biotech and nano weapons, begun to change grammar? And how will or should political imperatives adjust as a result? Answering these questions can, in turn, benefit defense studies as well as shed new light on some of the debates characterizing defense literature today.

Footnotes

[i] For example, see: David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith, 'Grammar but No Logic: Technique is Not Enough—A Response to Nagl and Burton,' Journal of Strategic Studies 33, no. 3 (June 2010): 437-446.

[ii] Carl von Clausewitz, Vom Kriege, 19th Ed., Book VIII, Chap. 6B, p. 991.

[iii] Another example is: Brigadier Justin Kelley and Dr. Michael James Brennan, Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy, Carlisle, Pa: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

[iv] Colin S. Gray, The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010); Beatrice Heuser, The Evolution of Strategy (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010); John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld, eds., The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010).

Coping with Nonstate Rivals

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While the ongoing debate on whether to use *population centric* versus *enemy centric* approaches rages on, few understand the logic behind Israel's approach vis-à-vis the militant organizations that exist at its doorstep. Moreover, analysts tend to employ the two approaches mentioned above when they interpret Israeli action and therefore often reach the wrong conclusions. The purpose of the paper is to explore the different approaches used by both the US and Israeli militaries when dealing with nonstate actors; namely the various groups and organizations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Gaza.

The Israeli approach is primarily designed to merely persuade the other side that any action will result in a high price

In a recent *Security Studies* article two researchers came to the conclusion that:

In both cases (Lebanon '06 and Gaza '08), the Israeli government sought to create a situation in which indigenous governments were more willing and better able to restrain these groups or remove them from power. Although Israel's coercive efforts undoubtedly damaged Hezbollah and Hamas materially, they also weakened state institutions.... and eliminated any realistic prospect that these groups could be restrained or removed from power through internal processes…

Ultimately, Israel's strategy was based on the premise that applying pressure to civilian populations and targeting civilian infrastructure—when combined with direct attacks against radical groups—would diminish popular support for these groups, the evidence to date is not encouraging. Moreover, it appears that Israel continues to believe in the effectiveness of this strategy.[i]

This brief article argues that the above analysis represents a misunderstanding of Israeli strategy. Furthermore, the Israeli approach was not designed to pressure either the government to restrain organizations or to diminish their popular support. The Israeli approach is much more limited and is primarily designed to merely persuade the other side that any action against Israel will result in a high price – thus achieving *deterrence*. Within this approach, the assumption is that the population will not reduce its ideological support for such organizations. However, practical considerations will cause them to pressure their leadership not to act against Israel, as they will partly pay the price.

In western military intellectual circles the issue of coping with nonstate rivals has been defined around the concept of counterinsurgency (COIN). COIN theory suggests that Clausewitz's *secondary Trinity* — government, population and the military — is fundamentally altered as insurgents act to overthrow the government while relying on the population's support for cover and legitimacy.[ii] Therefore, the classic symmetry between government versus government and military versus military is violated.[iii] While in the latter case winning a war means forcing the rival's government to surrender by neutralizing its military wing, this is less clear in COIN situations when there is a blurring of government, military and population.

After spending time in Vietnam as a journalist, Moshe Dayan observed this fundamental difference between conventional wars and counterinsurgency. Dayan wrote the following in his Vietnam diary:

In regular wars the measure of progress towards victory is clear – it is mostly geographic – territorial. One needs to get to Paris or Berlin etc, occupy the enemy capital, to bring its government to sign a surrender agreement. In this case the

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Americans are aware they could not pass the 17th latitude, could not bomb the civilian population etc, and how would this end? How could they reach a decision? How could they measure progress?[iv]

The scholarly literature today offers two schools of thought regarding the best way to cope with insurgencies. The first could be characterized as *enemy centric*. This approach suggests that COIN is not fundamentally different from conventional wars, thus the purpose and main effort of the campaign should focus on neutralizing the military wing by directly locating and engaging them. "A war is war is a war" as an American officer once stated.[v]

some analysts remain convinced that the main effort should be directed towards annihilating the insurgents

The second approach is known as *population centric*. This approach focuses its main effort on gaining the support of the population and by so doing depriving the insurgents of their main livelihood. The debates over the best approach for the involvement of the US-led coalition in Iraq and NATO in Afghanistan were mostly carried out in the context of these two approaches. Many opined that the US military's focus was too much on killing the enemy rather than on gaining the population's support or wining "hearts and minds". In the process the civilians suffered as a result of the fighting and therefore increased their support for the insurgents. One such proponent was John Nagl who, in his book *Learning to Eat a Soup with a Knife*, called for: "nation building rather than the destruction of the enemy army".[vi] Nagl was one of the key authors of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps Field Manual on counterinsurgency — FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency — which advocated focusing on the population's needs while warning against "overemphasizing killing and capturing the enemy rather than securing and engaging the populace".[vii] The debates continue, as some analysts remain convinced that the main effort should be directed towards annihilating the insurgents. One such critic is Australian Army Brigadier General Justin Kelly. In an article titled, "Time to move on from Hearts and Minds: Annihilation in COIN", Kelly stated, "We should be doing more killings and fewer good deeds."[viii]

While this debate continues to rage, we have also witnessed the emergence of a third approach that has characterized the Israeli response to nonstate organizations during the last decade or so. This approach is based on deterrence (or in some cases coercion and deterrence). Deterrence can be achieved by either inflicting pain on the population or by severely impairing the enemy's military capabilities. According to John Mearsheimer deterrence will not succeed when the potential attacker believes that a successful counter-attack is both unlikely and costly. According to him, a rival that lacks a quick, decisive and low-cost maneuver, as in the case of Hamas and Hezbollah, would most likely to be deterred under these circumstances.[ix] Robert Pepe, whose work focused on coercion, concluded that denial aimed at military capabilities is the best strategy to ensure coercion. However, he questions whether this conclusion is valid in the case of counterinsurgency campaigns.[x] In the case of Hezbollah the approach was to deter the organization. In the case of Hamas, the approach was one of coercion and deterrence (change its ongoing behavior - eight years of continuous rocket and mortar attacks). Deterrence was achieved in both cases by aiming at the military capabilities and hitting them as hard as possible. However, as both Hamas' and Hezbollah's military deployment is intertwined with the local population, there was a spillover effect that caused the population a painful experience. The damage to both the militants and the population created a deterrence effect.

A Pessimistic Approach

There are a few characteristics that are unique to this approach, which we may call "severe impairment". In contrast to the US approach in Afghanistan and Iraq, this doctrine is quite limited and modest in its stated objectives. It is not about changing local societies or about nation building. It is not about achieving victory and annihilation of the insurgents. It will not prevent these groups from rearming and regrouping in preparation for the next round. At best, it will secure quiet borders for a few years. In contrast to the first two approaches described earlier, the deterrence approach tries to avoid lengthy occupation and the prolonged presence of soldiers on hostile territory. The negative experience of the Israelis both in Lebanon and in Gaza has led to a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces. The current Israeli policy advocates as little presence as possible on the ground, for the shortest possible time. It is for this reason that the approach calls for a massive use of stand off fire combined with limited incursions. A major ground maneuver is the last resort, with a preset date for the force to exit also being required.

At best, it will secure quiet borders for a few years.

This approach is not new in history. Following the Roman defeat in what is known as the "Varus Disaster", when three Roman legions were annihilated in 7 AD by Germanic tribes, the Romans decided not to expand their empire beyond the Rhine River. However, in order to deter the Germanic peoples from crossing into their own territory and in order to regain their respect, the Roman legions launched a short campaign across the Rhine led by the Roman General Germanicus. Germanicus' legions inflicted huge casualties and after a few more raids across the Rhine, Tiberius ordered the Roman forces to halt and withdraw back to Roman territory. The Romans decided that the huge cost and risk of keeping the Roman army operating beyond the Rhine was simply not worth the benefit to be gained.[xi]

Another historical example which was primarily aimed at the population was William T. Sherman's march to the sea. According to B. H Liddell Hart in *The Strategy of Indirect Approach*, "There is no question that the moral effect of this march upon the country at large was greater than would have been the most decided victory."

Thus, when speaking about the goals of the Lebanon War in 2006, Chief of Staff (COS) Halutz stated: "The strategic goals included: …expanding deterrence…a serious blow

to Hezbollah".[xii] For that end, Halutz believed that the maneuver component is not always vital:

"The way to fight terror is not by employing armored divisions that will capture territory, it is by inflicting continuous, painful blows that will inflict on the other side a much higher price than he ever expected….At its foundation lies an approach that calls for action that consists of plentiful force, …one that produces deterrence…" [xiii]

Brigadier General Gal Hirsh also understood the objectives of the war as: "…It was obvious that the aim of the maneuver into Lebanon is not to eliminate launches but to directly hit Hezbollah, to make it pay a high price and to shake its foundations." [xiv]

the population unavoidably became part of the war's strategy

The IDF plan was strictly aimed at Hezbollah's military targets and a few infrastructure installations that could serve a military purpose. However, the IDF quickly discovered the spillover effect on the population. Due to the nature of deployment of Hezbollah, which is to be embedded "amongst the people", to use Rupert Smith's famous phrase, the population had been impacted greatly.[xv] Unavoidably, they became part of the war's strategy:

"The stream of refugees towards the north — Tyre and Beirut — grew and served two purposes: To increase our operational freedom to act around the villages but also to make the price clear to the Lebanese people for its support for the Hezbollah." [xvi]

On the whole, Operation Cast Lead (2008-09) followed a similar pattern. The purpose was to hit the military wing of Hamas as hard as possible and within a short timeframe. However, as in Lebanon, the side effect meant the population suffered too. As one Israeli analyst said "…placing their military capabilities among civilians who serve as human shields can potentially help strengthen Israeli deterrence, as long as the price of the conflict is clear to all of the parties involved." [xvii] The objective was regaining deterrence against Hamas, which was achieved. Hamas, who is directly responsible for the population's well being in Gaza, would not run the risk of having "…the population rise against it …" [xviii] It is the assessment of yet another analyst that "…The operation has caused substantial damage to the military and civilian infrastructure and at least during the period of reconstruction …Hamas will maintain a tranquil border." [xix]

The objective was regaining deterrence against Hamas, which was achieved.

In both operations the ultimate objective was therefore not to destroy or bring the other side to total collapse, and certainly not to change the political landscape on which it thrives. The latter two require long occupation periods. Even then success is not guaranteed. The objective was to achieve deterrence, which would prevent Hezbollah from initiating any action against Israel; and likewise to forcefully prevent Hamas from shooting rockets into Israel, and further deter it from hostile action.

However, one of the key differences between Lebanon and Gaza was the role of maneuver.The Lebanon war proved that large maneuver is required, but in contrast to its traditional role the task "…of the maneuvering forces will be to conquer the area from which the high trajectory weapons are fired and gain operational control. Conquering the territory is not a goal in and of itself, but it allows a reduction in the fire and destruction of the enemy's operational infrastructures until the forces are evacuated." [xx] The ground forces conduct what could be described as a large raid; after achieving their missions and evacuating the territory, there is a very short "hold" and no "build" phase following the termination of the "clear" phase.

The Israeli approach in both cases proved to be effective.

The Israeli approach in both cases proved to be effective. Israel achieved effective deterrence and at least for the time being has not been challenged by either Hamas or Hezbollah. No one can tell how deterrence will persist. As stated earlier, this approach provides a limited remedy. Israel paid a high price in international public opinion while its approach did not solve the root causes of the problem. Moreover, it does not even prevent the organizations from rearming and preparing for the next round, which will most likely be more violent. However, it has bought years of quiet borders — not a negligible achievement in this volatile region.

Footnotes

[i] Evan Braden Montgomery and Stacie L. Pettyjohn, "Democratization, Instability, and War: Israel's 2006 Conflicts with Hamasand Hezbollah", Security Studies, (August, 2010), 19: 3, 521 — 554

[ii] Beatrice Heuser, Reading Clasuewitz, (London: Pimilico,2002), 54.

[iii] Martin van Creveld, The Transformation of War, (New York, NY: Free Press, 1991), 57-62.

[iv] Moshe Dayan, Vietnam Diary, (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1977), 40 [Heb.]

[v] US Army Colonel Harry Summers quoted in John Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 27.

[vi] Ibid, 223.

[vii] Department of the Army, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 Counterinsurgency (Washington DC, 2006), 51.

[viii] Justin Kelly, 'How to Win in Afghanistan: Time to move on from Hearts and Minds: Annihilation in COIN', Quadrant, Vol. LIII:4, (April ,2009).

[ix] John Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP , 1983), 203-208.

[x] Robert Pape, Bombing to Win, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP), 30-31.

[xi] B. H Liddell Hart, Strategy of Indirect Approach, (London: Faber, 1967),169-170.

[xii] Dani Haloutz, Strightforwrad, (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2010), 364-365. [Hebrew.]

[xiii] Ibid., 362.

[xiv] Gal Hirsh, War Story –Love Story, (Tel-Aviv: Yedoith Ahronoth, 2009), 240. [Hebrew.]

[xv] General Rupert Smith coined the term 'War Among the People' to describe the character of today's conflict; Rupert Smith, The Utility of Force, The Art of War in the Modern World, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 5-6.

[xvi] Halutz , Straight Forward , 394.

[xvii] Gabriel Siboni, 'War and Victory', Military and Strategy, INSS, Vol.1:3 (December 2009). [Hebrew.]

[xviii] Giora Eiland, 'The Political-Military Relations and the Operation Results', INSS Strategic Briefing, Vol.11:4, (February 2009). [Hebrew.]

[xix] Zachi Shalom, 'Is it Possible to Reach a Decision against Terror Organization: Cast Lead as a Case Study', INSS Strategic Briefing, Vol.11:4, (February 2009). [Hebrew.]

[xx] Siboni, 'War'.

Seek and Destroy: The Forgotten Strategy for Countering Armed Rebellion

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"If the people of Georgia raise a howl against my barbarity and cruelty, I will answer that war is war, ***and not popularity-seeking****."*

William Techumseh Sherman, in a letter from 1864

Kind-hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat the enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst.

Carl Von Clausewitz, "On War" - Book II, Chapter 7.

The purpose of this article is to argue that the destruction of the enemy's forces lies at the heart of countering both terrorism and insurgency.[i] Nothing here is original or insightful, since such assertions were once statements of the obvious. At the time of writing, they no longer are. Insurgency and terrorism are defeated primarily through killing and capturing those who participate in it.

It is not the aim of this article to advance or discuss why many do not agree with this obvious and enduring fact. Rather, it is to lay out the case that any policy that seeks to have a terrorist organisation or an insurgency cease their pursuit of an objective via armed violence, should focus on the physical attrition of such groups as being the primary contribution of force to gaining such a policy goal.

The words "terrorism" and "insurgency" are only used here to denote the difference given to them by common usage. Neither is a rigorous or useful term for what is best described as "armed rebellion."

Countering armed rebellion - what's the policy?

Any government that faces armed rebellion will usually first make it clear that it will not alter any existing policy or re-distribute political power because of armed threats made against it. It may have to alter that position subsequently, but generally speaking, most governments will strongly resist any policy being dictated to them via violence, and rightly so. It seems fair to suggest that getting any armed opposition to unconditionally cease violent action will form the core of any reasonable policy. If the policy is merely to achieve a cessation of violence, then this can be achieved by appeasement or acquiescence to the enemy's demands. Thus the strategy should actually be to force the enemy to give up fighting, by breaking their will to persist in the endeavour.

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The most appropriate initial policy should thus seek an "unconditional and permanent cessation of violence" from all or any violent actors except the government. If that goal proves elusive within the time and resources that the policy deems reasonable, or the political will to endure in combat evaporates, then the policy will have to alter. This will most likely occur when bad tactics fail and/or undermine the policy. This situation would thus create conditions where a negotiated settlement would seem appropriate. However if the rebels are still actively conducting operations, then the strategy has already failed and the enemy has benefited from armed violence. This will nearly always have negative implications for the future.

So the policy should always be to force the armed enemy group to renounce violence. This essentially means delivering much the same effect as unconditional surrender, though

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it may not use those terms. However emphasis should be placed on forcing compliance, not merely requesting it, though procedures by which the rebels can request a cease-fire should always be in place.

So, the strategic objective set forth by such a policy will generally be most effectively achieved by killing and capturing those using violence.

So the strategic objective set forth by such a policy will generally be most effectively achieved by killing and capturing those using violence. Who will (or will not) need killing or detaining will be a critical detail at the tactical level, but the strategy will be one of attrition. This strategy has to be realised in tactics; and the tactics chosen will be specific actions that kill or capture those who are instrumental to and/or materially supportive of illegal violent opposition to government policy.

Therefore the precise nature of the tactics and against whom they are applied will have to support the policy. Killing and detaining the wrong people will at best be irrelevant to achieving the policy, or at worst catastrophically undermine it. Killing and detention will always be violently and even non-violently opposed by those who share the policy objectives of the terrorists or insurgents, but this is inherent to all forms of armed conflict. Importantly and explicitly, the aim is to kill and/or capture the rebels, while leaving the civilians unharmed.

Moral and legal objections - the problem with "hearts and minds"

Very few of the often cited objections to killing and capturing terrorists or insurgents are ever supportive of the idea that killing and capturing the enemy does not deliver the policy objective. More often than not the argument does not resides in the issue of killing and capturing insurgents and terrorists itself, but rather in the issue of killing and detaining the wrong people and thus undermining a policy that supposedly relies on the political support of the population. Indeed, the often-used phrase "winning hearts and minds" means nothing more than gaining the political support of the population. This means the population supports the government.

Yet it does not in and of itself deliver the policy. That the population supports the government may be irrelevant. Armed force means that the insurgents can coerce the population and gain support via intimidation. Terrorists may not even require any significant population support at all. Lenin said one man with can gun can control 100 without one. No social program, promise of protection, provision of services or education can deliver 100% of the population, or even 90%. 1 percent of a 3 million population is 30,000 people who could support an insurgency. 0.1 percent is 3,000. That 99.9 percent may support the government is thus irrelevant. Criminal gangs operate in cities all over the worlds using this principle. Indeed, the example of criminal gangs is highly relevant.

Terrorism and insurgency are crimes. Regardless of the specific act, when perpetrated it usually contravenes one or more laws relevant to the time and place of the offence. This is not to make an attempt at defining terrorism or insurgency. The sole point here is that regardless of the political motivation or its justification, the killing and/or destruction inherent to violently furthering a political cause within a state usually breaches existing legislation. Thus, those doing so are criminals in the eyes of the law. No emotional rationalisation can alter this. Therefore inciting or assisting in the performance of these acts should, or usually does, attract legal sanction.

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So how does an insurgency differ from terrorism? The distinctions that exist are essentially arbitrary and not fit for purpose[ii]. Differentiating between terrorism and insurgency is pointless and largely pseudo-intellectual. The idea that "counter-terrorism" is somehow distinct from "counter-insurgency" is an idea not held to rigour; it is extremely subjective, politically motivated and usually self-serving.

Insurgency and terrorism are both forms of armed rebellion, and both are always illegal within the jurisdictions they operate. Both are criminal activities, be it planting a bomb at a bus stop, or conducting an attack on an army base. The armed rebellions that have delivered decisive results have almost always had to employ armed force at a level that requires a military response to counter. However, military action by irregular forces[iii] is almost always illegal in terms of the law of the state within and/or against which they are perpetrated. Regardless of whether the government employs military forces or not, the rule of law is how the authority of the state is expressed. In this respect, the differentiation between "insurgency" and "terrorism" is useless. Both are defeated by the same strategy of attrition, albeit appropriately modified by the context of policy.

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Violent challenges to government control, as expressed by the rule of law, cannot be allowed. Nor can the incitement or support of such challenges be allowed to go un-punished. War and rebellion are not legal conditions. They are violent contests for political power. The law is merely an expression of that power. Governments spend a great deal of time crafting legislation. Law is not inherently either just or ethical. It merely "is". Some laws may make it "illegal" to hold a certain faith or to own property if you have a particular ethnic background. That is not the concern here. The issue is that violent opposition to the authority and/or policy of the state can never be tolerated, either internally or from other states or political entities. The counter to such a threat, a state

must seek the destruction of the enemies' armed force. When those armed force are also the source of the violent political discourse that has been set forth to counter state policy, this need is all the greater.

Friction - quantifying tactical objectives for a strategy of attrition

Seeking to destroy the enemy, as an armed force, is a clear strategic objective to deliver the unconditional cessation of armed action by the enemy. Thus the strategy is one of attrition. The actual physical destruction of an entire organisation is usually not possible, or even necessary. You merely have to kill and detain enough of the enemy to break the individual and collective will of their armed wing and/or leadership to persist. No enemy is untameable in terms of attrition or exhaustion. In this respect so-called rebels are no different from regular armies.

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However, unlike regular armies, here the focus of force is usually best realised at the individual level. You can deny ground, and seize objectives. Indeed it may be necessary to do so. Yet it is the tactical objective of the "body count", both living and dead, that delivers strategic success, which in turn serves the policy. Logically, you can kill and capture your way to success, *if* this is done well enough to break their collective will to endure. After all, rebels essentially aim to kill enough people to break the will of a government or population to resist their policy. Therefore, the reverse is also true. This is supported by 3,000 years of political and military history.

While this is logically simple, it is incredibly hard to execute the tactics to deliver such a result. The strategy of killing and capturing to support a policy of "unconditional cessation" requires a very precise execution of tactics, because the levels of force usually have to be restricted to ensure that those not guilty of challenging the authority of the government remain un-harmed. Sometimes they will be, but the percentage of innocent civilians killed as a result of the governments armed action should be kept to a minimum, as a matter of utmost urgency. However, a balance must be struck between rewarding the terrorists' or insurgents' use of the population to restrict the use of armed force, and the effective prosecution of operations. Policy is generally best served by killing those seen to victimise the population, therefore the government should not be part of that victimisation process. In this regard cultural understanding need only extend to being aware of what actions may and may not cause unnecessary offence to civilians.

It would thus seem wise to try and exclude the population from the competition. The population is not the prize. The population is the audience. The prize is the control that the unchallenged rule of law creates. In this competition, you win because the other team are dead or have run away. Support does not create power. Unchallenged power creates support. The population will support the team they know will win. While fighting persists, the winner may not be clear. For the population, the wining team is the team that provides the beneficial rule of law and security. Allowing the population to remain separate from the actual armed struggle may have benefits in this regard.

The population will support the team they know will win.

Identifying and finding the enemy is thus of extremely high importance. Who needs to be killed and/or captured and why, is the domain of the intelligence professional. The population are more likely to provide actionable information to the team they believe will win than the one they think will lose. A substantial intelligence effort must be combined with a clear understanding of what constitutes illegal or unacceptable challenges to government authority. Owning firearms may not be illegal. It may even normal. Thus there must be a sound legal basis for the employment of armed force to kill or capture. This is a requirement that cannot be avoided, as enforcing the law is the expression of government power.

Thus, the body count should reflect both a rigorous and evidence-based approach to determining who you have either detained and/or killed and why. Done badly, by poorly trained soldiers, a body count may be entirely counter-productive. Yet a good army will be able to effectively employ a body count methodology.

In addition, the mechanics of detention must account for both detaining those convicted of crimes and those detained because they were captured during or after armed action. Taking part in illegal armed action should be an offence and attract a considerable sentence. It will also contribute to the denial of manpower to the enemy and the breaking of their will, both individually and collectively.

The military guidelines called "rules of engagement" (ROE) should provide the legal basis for the government's use of violence in support of policy. Policy demands that the enemy unconditionally surrender in the same way that law demands that a murderer does the same. ROE ensure that the tactics do not harm the policy, whilst aiding the government's expression of its power and control. Power and control should be efficient and effective, not clumsy and useless. Populations which are threatened are best secured by killing those who might seek to harm them, or exercise control over them.

Delivering the political objective

The political objective is delivered by the reduction in effective enemy action.

So, the number of dead or detained is the tactical result. It is not an actual measure of success. While the body count should be aimed at accurately accounting for and exploiting who has been killed or captured, it does not

signify the gaining of the political objective. The political objective is delivered by the reduction in effective enemy action. How many armed attacks government forces suffer, and how many casualties they sustain are critical in gauging the progress of your operations. High or rising casualties amongst the government's own forces may bear excessively on policy. This is hardly surprising, as the enemy's main objective is to pressure government policy by causing casualties, both military and civilian. It could also be claimed that normal levels of activity and commerce amongst the civilian population are indicators of progress. This is only true if that activity is widespread, sustained and enduring. Afterall, commercial activity may also thrive in areas under rebel control.

Progress will be indicated in the reduction of violence to a sustainable and acceptable level. If the rebels cannot usefully kill and destroy in the furtherance of their strategy, then they will soon become irrelevant. Irrelevance will usually erode their political will to endure in the conflict. Thus their defeat may often be more a function of exhaustion rather than destruction, but they will only become exhausted due to constant and unrelenting pressure to visit harm upon them. Seeking destruction can and does deliver exhaustion.

The objective is always the securing of the political aim. That political aim is always both legitimate and ethical.

The idea that armed rebellion is best countered by addressing the cause of the rebellion is a diversion. Governments may wish to alter specific policies to address the desires of all or some of their population, but this should only do so once the armed rebellion is defeated. Victory is not achieved when the populace consents to the government's legitimacy and stops actively and passively supporting the insurgency[iv]. Victory is achieved when the insurgency has ceased to conduct violence because those prosecuting it are either dead, detained or hiding in fear of their lives. The aim should be to make the populations' active or passive support of the violence irrelevant. The acknowledged existence of the dead, detained and suppressed should have a deterrent effect on those who may consider using violent means. Indeed, history proves it does.

Additionally, legitimacy is purely subjective. Legitimacy is not, in and of itself a requirement. The objective is always the securing of the political aim. That political aim is always both legitimate and ethical. No nation or political body has ever advanced a policy it believed unethical and/or illegitimate. Policy is, by definition, what people believe to be necessary, and therefore right. Thus, legitimacy is inherent within the given the context of its existence. Conversely, a people under occupation may never believe the occupation to be legitimate. A nation forced to adopt democracy may never believe democracy to be a legitimate form of government, but if another nation believes it should be, then it must be forced upon them and violent opposition skilfully suppressed and destroyed. If armed force is not part of the political debate, then there is simply normal political debate, conducted within legal means. Illegal non-violent means are a strictly political problem, in terms of the action best taken to counter such activity.

Thus, the rule of law is how government control must express itself. Those abusing the rule of law for matters of self-interest are working against the government and should be considered as such and dealt with appropriately. Likewise, the rebels can only seek to set forth their own policy via laws and rules that they are able to enforce. This may appear as a competition between two forms of jurisdiction, thus the false assertion that rebels do not win by outfighting, but "out governing". [v] The dead and detained cannot govern. Killing the enemy leaves the government in control. Once in control, control must be applied or else it will cease to exist. However, gaining control is critical.

Conclusion

Given the logic of the need to destroy the enemy, it could be argued that armies which are not primarily focussed on the destruction of the enemy are those lacking the skill, and/or time, resources and political will to do so. When faced with armed rebellion the policy of forced unconditional and permanent cessation of violence by the enemy is what any government requires before any other policy can be sought. That objective is most likely to be delivered by the physical attrition of the rebel's armed forces while, where possible, reducing any negative effect of armed operations on the governments own population. Armed force must be applied against armed force to ultimately achieve government control, expressed by the rule of law.

Footnotes

[i] The author would like to acknowledge the work of Carl von Clausewitz in the production of this article.

[ii] It is noteworthy that the British in Malaya referred to the enemy as "terrorists," and not Insurgents This was also the case in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Kenya, Oman and Rhodesia (by the Rhodesians). All may have been "counter-insurgency" campaigns, but that was utterly academic to the men on the ground.

[iii] Irregular forces are defined here as non-state forces, usually lacking documentation, pay, formal training and a declared chain of command.

[iv] FM3-24 Para 1-14

[v] This aphorism is usually attributed to Bernard Fall.

Special Forces – Strategic Asset

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Special Forces are vital strategic asset performing functions others cannot. All military units are specialists in their own specific role, requiring personnel of particular aptitudes differing from those required in other units, and specialised organisation, training and equipment. Special Forces are no exception, being military assets designed and trained to conduct tactical actions delivering strategic outcome that is out of proportion with their size and that if conducted by conventional units, may have a disproportionate negative impact on policy. So, the aim of Special Forces is to deliver high precision at lower risks and costs than might otherwise be possible; specialists they are, but 'elite', not.

the aim of Special Forces is to deliver high precision at lower risks and costs than might otherwise be possible

Despite their potential significance for policy makers, Special Forces are largely overlooked by academia. This may be due partially to image problems arising from their popularity in sensationalist media and as a subject for popular films and video games.[i] Moreover, Special Forces have no Guru and no 'Great Theoretician' to advance their case, as insurgency had with Lawrence, Mao and Che — this normally providing the start point for academic discussion of any form of warfare. To compound this, that other staple of academic papers, 'doctrine', is difficult to obtain due partially to official secrecy but more likely because codified templates for action are a liability for this type of force. While they certainly have doctrine for command, control and planning, with operational and tactical methods Special Forces operatives tend to echo Clausewitz instinctively, arguing that theory is the wise man's tool and the fool's master, and that the often significant challenges they face are dealt with more effectively by originality of thought and flexibility of action than codified methodologies.[ii] For example, the tactics, techniques and procedures of the British Army's 22nd Special Air Service Regiment (22 SAS) have evolved organically, driven at the tactical level largely by the senior non-commissioned officers who command the small teams which are the SAS' main tactical blocks and above this by senior UK Special Forces officers' interpretation of the strategic situation at the time and place of operating.[iii] The process is bottom-up, not top-down, which creates an approach where tactics can be matched directly to the requirements of policy.

Another possible reason for the paucity of useful academic literature is that Special Forces are supposedly controversial, as touched on already.[iv] This began as early as 1941, when formation commanders in Eighth Army complained that the plethora of British 'private armies' in North Africa were drawing off the most resourceful and aggressive officers and NCOs to the detriment of parent units. Their disposition could not have been helped by the questionable outcome of certain operations: in June 1941, 7 and Middle East Commandos fought in Crete, taking 70% casualties, while 11 Commando's raids on the coast of Vichy-held Syria produced 25% casualties; 11 Commando's best-known operation, the attempt to assassinate Field Marshal Rommel, of 17/18 November 1941, failed disastrously, leading to the destruction of almost the entire force.[v] A recurring theme of Special Forces histories and memoirs has been the need to convince conservative senior officers of their worth, while preventing misdirection of manpower, funds and equipment by badly informed commanders and policy makers.

The 'poaching' and 'not cost-effective' accusations can now seem dated, even 'historic', and, indeed, one now tends to hear them more from historians than soldiers. At least since the 1990s, Special Forces have been recognised by many senior strategic practitioners as a far cheaper asset than others. For example, small numbers of British, Australian and US Special Forces were deployed in lieu of larger formations across parts of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and delivered the intended strategic outcome, enhancing the combat effectiveness of local friendly forces to where they

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could defeat the common enemy.[vi] And, because of the growing perception of them as 'silver bullet', Special Forces have come to enjoy patronage at the highest levels, such as that of former US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. This is not entirely new, matching as it does John F. Kennedy's support for the US Army's Special Operations Forces and Margaret Thatcher's enthusiasm for the SAS. However, new issues have emerged: enthusiastic but uneducated patrons have committed Special Forces to inappropriate tasks, then subjected them to disastrous levels of micro-management, as with several operations of US Special Forces since the 1960s. They have also viewed them as a politically acceptable substitute for other, possibly more effective options, as in Afghanistan in 2001 or northern Iraq in 2003, where, despite US Special Forces' spectacular short-term successes, deployment of larger formations may have been wiser in the long term. Moreover, these enthusiasts may direct Special Forces to ill-advised, 'something must be done' initiatives, such as assigning the US Army Delta Force to rescue American diplomats held in Tehran in 1980, or 22 SAS to deal with rioting prisoners at Peterhead Jail in 1987, after which one Conservative MP suggested publicly they should be deployed against rioters in Britain's inner cities.[vii] To compound this, their current popularity means Special Forces risk attracting military careerists eager to enhance their CVs. Special Forces commanders have just as often been guilty of seeking out tasks to reap good publicity and garner political support. In 1982, the then-Commanding Officer, 22 SAS, embodied many of the criticisms levelled at Special Forces. Still basking in the glory of the Iranian Embassy siege of two years before and the political clout it gave him, he as good as invited himself and his Regiment to the Falklands War; where he waged his own private war against the Argentines of questionable relevance to what the rest of the Task Force was attempting, and supported a proposal for an attack on airfields in mainland Argentina, which was fortunately abandoned as it would almost certainly have resulted in an escalation of the war as well as the complete loss of the SAS squadron committed to the task.[viii] All this worked, as he rose to the rank of full general in the British Army and senior United Nations command.

the aim of Special Forces is to deliver high precision at lower risks and costs than might otherwise be possible

Despite cases such as these, the balance of evidence indicates that Special Forces can be a critical strategic asset, *provided they are used properly*. As to what 'used properly' means, there are three designated roles of UK Special Forces at the time of writing: surveillance and reconnaissance, support and influence, and offensive action against important targets. These mission types are apparent in the histories of most Special Forces, UK and otherwise.[ix] The surveillance and reconnaissance role impacts frequently more at the operational than the strategic level, and usually involves Special Forces working to the benefit of other forces in theatre. For example, the Long Range Desert Group's (LRDG) reporting on the movements of Axis reserves deep behind their lines in North Africa, or UK Special Forces intelligence-gathering, in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles, in Aden and Republican-controlled areas of Northern Ireland.[x] However, Special Forces are growingly informing decision-making at the government level. They do this through covert or concealed insertion into global trouble spots from where they can report back on the situation 'in real time' in ways in which satellites and spy aircraft cannot. They are able to achieve this with more flexibility and less of the 'friction' arising from taskable agents of intelligence agencies. They also have the ability to be reassigned to other tasks, such as overseeing and protecting the evacuation of civilians, as 22 SAS were reported as doing in Libya in February 2011.[xi]

Special Forces can be a critical strategic asset, *provided they are used properly*

Offensive action can be divided into two broad forms: *coups de main* - seizing key facilities or people as part of wider operations within a theatre - or hit-and-run raids aimed specifically at neutralising such targets. While conventional units such as light infantry or even armour might reasonably execute such actions, what differentiates Special Forces is the precision with which they can conduct them, and being able to conduct them in time and space not accessible by conventional units. Examples include Otto Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini from Allied captivity in September 1943 and his kidnap of Nicholas Horthy, son of the Regent of Hungary, in October 1944, as a negotiating tool; Special Operations Executive's (SOE) assassination of *Obergruppenfuehrer* Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi governor of Czechoslovakia in June 1942; Allied Special Forces' operations against Saddam Hussein's Scuds during the 1991 Gulf War, aimed partially at protecting rear areas in Saudi Arabia, partially at keeping Israel out of the war.[xii] All these operations were effective at the strategic level, and each involved the kinetic action of no more than a few hundred lightly armed personnel, even fewer in most of them.

what differentiates Special Forces is the precision

Cost-effectiveness becomes more apparent still with influence and support, which involves, among other things, waging warfare in enemy-held areas in cooperation with local forces, in many cases as a covert surrogate for main force action. A good example of the potential political-strategic impact of this is the use of two squadrons of 22 SAS to assault the main rebel stronghold in the Djebel Akhdar in Oman in 1959, as a low-key, plausibly deniable substitute for a major British deployment in the immediate aftermath of the Suez embarrassment, and which succeeded in saving the regime of the Sultan of Oman, a close British ally in a globally important region.[xiii] A more open variation came in 2001, US SOF operating alongside Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan, providing technical and firepower support, summoning airstrikes from the US and allied Air Forces, and generally ensuring the often unpredictable Afghan warlords abided by US strategic aims.[xiv] In both cases again, less than 100 pairs of boots were deployed on the ground.

Under these terms it makes sense that Special Forces' command arrangements reflect their strategic role: they

work as companies, platoons, sections or sometimes even pairs, but are tasked by headquarters several echelons higher, at the theatre or even cabinet levels of command. For example, the LRDG, operating in Patrols of 32 men, was controlled directly from British Army General Headquarters (GHQ) Middle East, while the Army and Royal Marines Commandos, fighting as companies or battalions, were directed by Combined Operations Command, whose Chief sat on the Chiefs of Staff Committee and held equal status with the other three service chiefs. It is a tradition continued by the Director of UK Special Forces today, a major general reporting directly to the Chief of the Defence Staff and, when required, via him to the Cabinet. Special Forces are therefore separable from other so-called 'elites', specialist light infantry raiding or invasion forces, like the British Army's Parachute Regiment, the US and Royal Marines, the US Airborne or Soviet/Russian Air Assault Regiments, which tend to operate in larger formations and be tasked and commanded in the same ways as other conventional units.

The ability to conduct operations in locations inaccessible to other units is another distinguishing aspect of Special Forces. This is linked to the requirement calling for a Special Force in the first place: the LRDG were created because the British Army was operating in a desert, the Royal Marines Special Boat Squadron (SBS) and US Navy Sea-Air Land units (SEALs) because maritime powers needed to strike at maritime and littoral targets inaccessible to conventional forces. At its simplest this may mean just bypassing enemy main forces around an open flank, for example the LRDG and SAS in North Africa in 1940-42, or infiltrating or exploiting breaches or weak spots in the front line created by overstretch or friendly main-force action. A second means is airborne or airmobile – the vertical flank - and a third technique is approach by water, unsurprisingly favoured by maritime powers such as Britain and the USA. While these techniques are also used by others, Special Forces are again distinguished by the ability and training to do so at greater range and with a far lower signature, such as deploying from submerged submarines or free-falling from aircraft travelling at altitudes normally used by commercial airliners.

The ability to conduct operations in locations inaccessible to other units is another distinguishing aspect of Special Forces.

Such operations require particularly motivated, fit and intelligent manpower, and a further, informal way of assessing any Special Force is to look at its size and selection and training procedures. The strength of 22 SAS is usually put at around 300-350 men: candidates for the Regiment must serve a minimum number of years in the British forces before applying and then survive an almost year-long selection process in which the pass rate is never more than 15% (10% for officers), this in an already small, highly professional army. [xv] There are similar requirements for Delta Force, SEAL Team Six and the "Tier-One" Special Forces of other NATO countries. It is also worth noting that the bulk of candidates for 22 SAS come from the Parachute Regiment while Delta Force draws many from the US Army Rangers, meaning potential entrants have passed arduous selection procedures already in order to get into their original units.

Special Forces conduct action against strategically significant targets that other forces cannot reach

It can be contended, therefore, that Special Forces conduct action against strategically significant targets that other forces cannot reach and achieve results disproportionate to size, perhaps during periods of international confrontation as well as 'open' war, so providing a flexible means of supporting allies, gathering intelligence and influencing the strategic situation in the direction their masters choose. This, however, risks overlooking the main role of Special Forces, post-1945, which has been in counterinsurgency. Sometimes this can be extremely overt, for instance the raids by Israeli Special Forces on facilities in countries used by terrorist insurgents or sympathetic governments, a cornerstone of Israel's counter-terrorist strategy since the 1950s. However, Special Forces deploy more often within their own government's sovereign territory or that of allies, their training and organisation allowing them to use the insurgents' own operational and tactical methods - ambush, assassination, attacks on supplies, suborning the local population - against them. Alternatively, they may take precise action against insurgents where there may be fallout from alternative methods - the most glamorous Special Forces role of all is the rescue of civilian hostages held by terrorist insurgents, as with Operation *Jonathan*, the Israeli raid on Entebbe in July 1976, or *Nimrod*, 22 SAS' storming of the Iranian Embassy in London in May 1980.

Perhaps the first to apprehend the usefulness of such forces in counterinsurgency was Brigadier Michael Calvert, the post-war refounder of the SAS, remarking on Malaya in 1951 that the British Army needed 'a force that would live, move and have its being in the jungle, like the guerillas [sic]...supplied and supported by air'; its role being 'to operate in deep jungle areas not controlled by other security forces, with the object of destroying guerilla [sic] forces, their camps and sources of supply'.[xvi] As such, Special Forces can form the backbone of an entire counterinsurgent philosophy, based on blurring their three main wartime roles. The US Army's Colonel Charlie Beckwith served an exchange-attachment as a troop commander with 22 SAS in 1962-1963, and made no secret of his creation, Delta Force, copying the organisation and ethos of 22 SAS, adapted to the more manual-orientated approach of the US Army. This was filtered through experience gained with Project DELTA of the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam in 1965-66, tasked with reconnaissance of Vietcong-held areas ahead of major operations, and authorised to ambush any guerrillas encountered. General Sir Frank Kitson, who organised and commanded 'counter-gangs' in the Kenya Mau-Mau insurgency of the 1950s, took the 'covert' role further, advocating deployment of officers with expertise in particular geographical regions to collect and assess information, supported by teams of local militia and 'turned' insurgents, trained and commanded by regular military personnel, to carry out offensive action when required.[xvii] 22 SAS formed such units, called *Firquat* or 'companies' in the Dhofar region of Oman in the insurgency of 1965-1975, SAS troops masquerading as 'training teams' in another

example of how Special Forces can act as a cost-effective and low-visibility substitute for more open deployment. [xix] This has the additional benefit of allowing intelligence agencies, with whom Special Forces collaborate very closely, to identify and train potential local agents among those forces. 2007-2008 saw US Special Forces forming several such units in Iraq. Whereupon it was hailed as a 'new way in war' in the literature, as is often the case when the media and academic community stumbles upon concepts known to practitioners for generations, US Special Forces having done this previously, successfully and largely unnoticed, in Vietnam. Overt offensive action can take the form of 'spectaculars' of the Entebbe, Mogadishu (1977) or Nimrod variety, but more often involves apprehending or neutralising suspected or known insurgents expected to resist with deadly force. For example, in Gibraltar in 1988, when SAS personnel ambushed and shot dead an Irish Republican Army (IRA) team intent on a bombing campaign in the colony, or US and British Special Forces' offensive against the insurgents' leadership and logistical networks in the cities of Iraq since 2003.[xx]

Overt offensive action can take the form of 'spectaculars' of the Entebbe, Mogadishu (1977) or *Nimrod* variety

Controversies now emerge. The public reaction to the Gibraltar episode reminds us that nowhere is the use of Special Forces more contentious than in counterinsurgency. The use of deadly force by army or police against elements of their own population is always going to be controversial in liberal democracies, given their emphasis upon the rule of law and legal due process, and a cultural morality centred upon unfettered freedom of political expression. Mark Urban's recent assertion that, as a liberal he finds the idea that insurgencies can be defeated through military means alone 'disturbing', speaks volumes for the cultural context in which Special Forces operate currently, one where traditional counter-insurgency is giving way to 'stabilisation' and uniformed social work, and in which 'going kinetic' on insurgents can be viewed by the voting public as a sign of failure.[xxi] Colin Gray has presented a political-cultural 'ladder of acceptability' for using Special Forces against insurgents, based upon 'brutal cynicism or sophisticated appreciation of the needs of Realpolitik', the aggressive use of such forces in 'peacetime' being more acceptable in some societies (Israel, Russia, some Arab and Asian countries) than others (Europe and the USA); Britain is halfway down Gray's list, but he noted the domestic outcry in the UK, 'couched substantially in ethical terms', following the Gibraltar incident. [xxii]

The public reaction to the Gibraltar episode reminds us that nowhere is the use of Special Forces more contentious than in counterinsurgency.

Such controversy is compounded by several factors. Using 'shock troops' may be counter-productive in that their necessarily robust approach might (and usually does) create media and public sympathy for the insurgents and can also provide a convenient 'bogeyman' for propaganda - the IRA, for instance, portrayed British counter-insurgent forces, from the Black and Tans to 22 SAS, as 'the strong arm of British imperialism'. This can be redoubled if a force develops - or even cultivates - a reputation for ferocity in action, as with 22 SAS, the Soviet/Russian *Spetznaz* or the IDF's "Unit 101". Yet, such a reputation might become a force multiplier when propagated via the very pop-culture 'military pornography' Professor Gray sees as undermining Special Forces' academic respectability.[xxiii] However the greatest problem – one requiring a paper on its own - is that counter-insurgent operations frequently produce situations like that in Gibraltar, SAS in Northern Ireland, or Israeli or Russian Special Forces since the early 1990s, of having no option but to open fire under ambiguous circumstances and in front of witnesses, then face what General Sir Peter de la Billière (a former CO 22 SAS and Director UK Special Forces) dismisses as 'the sort of rubbish which [people] produce when they have time to think about an event academically'.[xxiv]

History indicates that however 'controversial' Special Forces may appear, their utility to policy makers and their general effectiveness ensures that by any description, Special Forces *are* special.

Footnotes

[i] For a good summary of the academic view on Special Operations, see Colin S Gray, 'Handfuls of Heroes on Desperate Ventures: When do Special Operations Succeed?', Parameters, Spring 1999, pp.2-24, which can be accessed at http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/Articles/99spring/gray.htm and accessed last by the author on 4 February 2011. When the author recently asked a group of his undergraduate students what responses the term 'Special Forces' conjured up for them, one replied immediately, 'Call of Duty'

[ii] See Gray, 'Handfuls of Heroes', where he argues that Special Forces 'must not be doctrinaire' and Carl von Clausewitz, On War translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (London: Everyman's 1994) pp.153-174 for Clausewitz's views on the role theory in war, which are more enlightened than those of many of his disciples.

[iii] For differing views on the role of senior NCOs in the SAS and the 'Chinese Parliament' tradition, see Ken Connor, Ghost Force: The Secret History of the SAS (London: Cassell 1998), pp.11-113; Tony Geraghty, Who Dares Wins: The Special Air Service, 1950 to the Gulf War (London: Warner 1992), pp.11-14; Peter Ratcliffe DCM, Eye of the Storm: Twenty-Five Years in Action with the SAS (London: Michael O'Mara 2000) pp.297-299. 'Billy' Ratcliffe, a former Regimental Sergeant Major, 22 SAS, was sceptical about 'Chinese Parliaments' and his memoirs recount that during Operation Desert Storm, the CO of 22 SAS sacked one of this squadron commanders in the field for being too heavily influenced by one particular senior NCO.

[iv] For the most cited, and influential special forces critic, see Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Defeat into Victory (London: Cassell 1956), pp.546-549. Ironically, the Field Marshal's son, Colonel John Slim, was later CO 22 SAS.

[v] Special Forces in the Desert War (London: National Archives 2001), pp.276, 281-282, 416-418

[vi] Richard A Clarke, Against all Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror (London: Free Press 2003), pp.274-277; George Friedman, America's Secret War (London: Little, Brown 2004), pp.151-155, 160-165, 171, 178-182; Bob Woodward, Bush at War (London: Pocket Books 2003), pp.251-254, 260, 267, 275, 282

[vii] Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.474-480; a former officer in 22 SAS of the author's acquaintance commented that politicians' and senior commanders' eyes can be 'full of fairy dust' when dealing with the Regiment.

[viii] And came close to causing a mutiny in the Regiment in doing so – for two contrasting personal accounts, see Connor, Ghost Force, pp.374-378 and General Sir Peter de la Billière, Looking for Trouble: SAS to Gulf Command (London: HarperCollins 1994), pp.346-347

[ix] Private Personal correspondence with the author

[x] For example, see Special Forces in the Desert War, pp.130-132; Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.381-408; Mark Urban, Big Boy's Rules: The Secret Struggle against the IRA (London: Faber and Faber 1992), especially pp.38, 45, 180, 181

[xi] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8346608/Libya-SAS-drafted-in-to-rescue-hundreds-of-Britons.html

[xii] For detailed accounts of the strategic role of the SAS in the Gulf in 1991, see Connor, Ghost Force, pp.456-501; Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.23-79

[xiii] De la Billière, Looking for Trouble, pp.131-151; Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.166-178; JE Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies: The Sultanate's Struggle for Supremacy (London: Saqi 2007), pp.116-141

[xiv] See note 5 above

[xv] For details, see Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.500-532 and any number of personal accounts in SAS memoirs, such as Ratcliffe, Eye of the Storm, pp.52-71; like many members of 22 SAS, Ratcliffe began his career in the Parachute Regiment.

[xvi] Mike Calvert, Fighting Mad: One Man's Guerrilla War (London: AirLife 1996), p.205

[xvii] Peter Harclerode, Secret Soldiers: Special Forces in the War against Terrorism (London: Cassell 2000), pp.409-412

[xviii] Frank Kitson, Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping (London: Faber and Faber 1971), pp.139, 191-196

[xix] De la Billière, Looking for Trouble, pp.131-151; Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp178-206; Tony Jeapes, SAS Operation Storm: Secret War in the Middle East (London: Greenhill 2005), discusses the role of the Firquats in Oman throughout; Peterson, Oman's Insurgencies, especially pp.254-264

[xx] Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.282-322; Mark Urban, Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the SAS and the Secret War in Iraq (London: Little, Brown 2004), pp.137-148, 151-159, 240-243, 253-262

[xxi] Urban, Task Force Black, p.xvi

[xxii] Gray, 'Handfuls of Heroes'

[xxiii] In 'Handfuls of Heroes' he argues that Special Forces 'must be feared'.

[xxiv] De la Billière, Looking for Trouble, p.336, and see Geraghty, Who Dares Wins, pp.561-563; Urban, Big Boy's Rules, pp.69-78

My thanks to Colonel David Benest, the late Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, Professor Colin Gray, Colonel John Hughes-Wilson, Brigadier David Venn and other, unnameable sources for informing my views on this subject.

Cyber Power and Strategy – So What?

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Cyber Power represents the latest *vogue de jour* of the Strategic Studies community; it has enjoyed ever growing academic attention since the Revolution in Military Affairs concept of the 1990s was rife. Yet, despite all the hyperbole, there remains a lack of strategic appreciation as to what Cyber Power can actually offer to those who must do strategy. The reasons for this are twofold: first, the true extent of Cyber capability has not yet been realised, it is still growing and developing. Second, there is a lack of experience utilising Cyber Power in the real world, for the intention of attaining political objectives, against the will of an opponent. What is to be proposed here is a basic framework for consideration, to open wider more genuine strategic debate on this increasingly important strategic dimension.

The political context in which Cyber Power is expected to be used as an instrument of strategy must be carefully considered

Before any framework is proposed, a basic understanding of strategy must be adopted and clearly articulated. That of Clausewitz will suffice. If strategy is *'the use of the engagement for the object of the war'*[i] then any strategic consideration of Cyber Power must keep in mind the ends for which the instrument is to be used, which to date has been a considerable lapse in this area. The political context in which Cyber Power is expected to be used as an instrument of strategy must be carefully considered. That this has not been the case largely as a result of the point made above, that there is not yet enough experience of is the use of Cyber Power with which to inform strategic debate.

With this in mind, what should be considered is that Cyber Power will never be used by nation states as a panacea. It will not suddenly render obsolete maritime power (by which the vast majority of physical trade is still carried), nor will it become so dominant that every other instrument in the strategic toolbox will be made redundant. Rather, what is more likely is that control of the Cyber domain will remain subject to virulent contestation by actors competing for advantage in what is a very young arena of strategic engagement. Each nation state (or, sub-state actor, terrorist group, even organised criminal gang etc.) will most likely be seeking ways of making Cyber Power suit the already established modus operandi of that particular strategic culture. This will mean actors experimenting with Cyber Power to discover exactly what Cyber capabilities can offer. Only then will the coercive ability of Cyber Power begin to be better understood. The political, social, and cultural context of the actor trying to make this capability work will, however, remain important in deciphering and observing exactly how Cyber Power manifests itself.

So, to the point, what can Cyber Power actually do? The answer that will be given here will be incomplete, for the simple reason that consideration as to what Cyber Power can do can only be gauged based on what has thus far been observed through experience. That limited experience presents five avenues of strategic application.

First, Cyber Power as an intelligence tool. Cyber Power greatly increases the scope of information that can be collected, as well as the speed with which it can be acquired. Much of the leg work of intelligence agencies is today done by privateers, or even host governments themselves, such as western governments who openly publish online a great many details, such as parliamentary reports. There is simply far more information available openly, which is easily accessible then there has ever been in human affairs. Whereas in the past, a government would need to send representatives to a foreign land in order to observe and report on the dealings within a country, now such information can be gathered via largely open means much more quickly through the mediums of Cyber Space. Consider for instance the Taliban, who no longer need to rely on estimates as to the casualties they inflict on NATO forces, they can simply go online to the

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relevant defence ministry website, who publish the details of every soldier killed on operations. Not only this, but an ever-increasing amount of communications, is conducted via some form of telecommunications technology, resulting in greater scope for electronic interception. The intelligence world has a very large stake in becoming a primary player in, or beneficiary of, Cyber Space.

The intelligence world has a very large stake in becoming a primary player in, or beneficiary of, Cyber Space.

Second is the only avenue of Cyber experience thus far with "hard" results, the idea of assault. Such Cyber Warfare tactics include hacking, introducing viruses (such as STUXNET), "bot nets" or worms etc, into the Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) of networked states.[ii] This is a particular avenue of approach which has dominated speculative writing on the matter, *such as Carlin's A Farewell to Arms,*[iii] which inspired the popular movie Die Hard 4, in which a cyber attack paralysed the American CNI, from Federal buildings, to telecommunications assets, right down to traffic controls. If it was networked, it was shut down. Although CNI attacks are the main area of consideration with Cyber Power as Cyber Warfare, one must note that we remain largely in the realm of speculation. The only real experiences of such assaults have been the alleged forays by the Russians against some Eastern European nations, along with concrete evidence of such activity during their limited conflagration with Georgia. There has not yet been a real world Cyber attack on CNI proving that a nation's "nervous system" can be paralysed. Still, the potential to wield coercive power against a networked opponent is truly daunting, and well worth further investigation.

Thirdly is utilising Cyber Space to optimise the components of one's own hard power. The concepts of Network Centric Warfare and Revolutions in Military Affairs come to mind here; the advantages that networking one's military can deliver are clearly desirable. By gaining the ability for military forces to deploy worldwide, maintain communications with host nations thousands of miles away, and even in combat itself Cyber Power helps to increase response times through the application of technology in the loop of "find, fix, and finish".[iv] This represents s a proven capacity in optimising combat performances. Should this be doubted, simply consider the increasingly judicious use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) by the American military over Afghanistan and Pakistan, flown by remote pilot in the United States itself (a novel melding of Space and physical assets, connected through Cyber Space). Simply the ability to control assets in a theatre of operations from another continent, utilise local intelligence, and strike designated targets, can convey great advantages to the military that can best conceptualise and operationalise the Cyber means at their disposal.

Fourth is the flip side to number three; if one can greatly optimise one's own military, then you can undermine a networked enemy's capability by attacking the Cyber elements that underpin that network. The example of the Iranian nuclear program is illustrative; it is widely believed that Israeli and American efforts to undermine that program are increasingly being centred on Cyber attacks. Lacking the option of a physical attack on Iran at this time, or even covert operations, assaulting the networks that the Iranian program utilises appears an ever-increasingly attractive option. Or for another example consider China, who is believed to be working very hard to penetrate and compromise the Cyber elements which underpin American logistical apparatus for any Pacific ocean deployment, as a potential plan for reducing American combat effectiveness in any conflict.

The interaction between these avenues must be appreciated. Avenue two above could be used to optimise one's own forces by using Cyber Power. However, within avenue three lies a recognisable the dialectic of the use of force, namely, that if Cyber Power can give one side an advantage, then the very element producing that advantage must be a target worth attacking for a thinking, reacting opponent.

Fifth, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, is that Cyber Power is a potent moral tool. By hugely accelerating the speed of communications, to the extent that 24 hours news channels exist *en masse,* as well as the proliferation of social networking sites like Twitter, there is no, or at least negligible delay in reportage of world events. If a soldier dies in Afghanistan, it is announced in Whitehall by the close of business the next day, at the latest. What this means is that the time span of any feedback loop is greatly reduced. Cyber Space enables not only a controlling government, but also an electorate, to obtain information about current operations very fast indeed. Governments can be pressured faster than they can construct adequate responses, news agencies can expose scandals faster, and even if detail is lacking, incessant 24-hour coverage can still put even the most hardened administrations under severe strain.

Cyber Power is a potent moral tool

Operation Panther's Claw in Afghanistan is a useful example; the results of the operation to secure Afghan elections in Helmand Province were not even clear, yet considerable public pressure was heaped on the British government at home because the spike in casualties was not only communicated back to Britain very quickly, but also because extensive media coverage of the repatriation of dead soldiers precipitated a negative public backlash in Britain. If readers want a more potent example of the capacity of Cyber Space to influence the moral dimension by lubricating the feedback loop, then only one word is needed at this stage: Wikileaks. Julian Assange has exploited several of the advantages that Cyber Space, and created a very powerful tool of exposure.[v] Wikileaks has caused yet more controversy by leaking some 250,000 diplomatic cables of the US Government in November 2010, and this following the previous bulk releases of files regarding civilian casualties in Iraq, and details of the conduct of operations in Afghanistan. The impact of Cyber Power in the moral realm of strategy has been sorely overlooked at this stage; the ongoing saga of Julian Assange and his creation should serve to focus attention towards this neglected area.

These five avenues of approach reflect the experience of what has been seen so far; they are not intended to be

exhaustive nor exclusive, this author fully expects there to be other avenues in future. The simple argument here is that Cyber Power is not yet developed enough to show us additional avenues of application. And even if it is, then the actors wielding the instrument have not yet assimilated that capability into an operational tool of strategy.

The impact of Cyber Power in the moral realm of strategy has been sorely overlooked at this stage

At this stage, however, it is also important to consider what Cyber Power cannot do, and before these specifics are enumerated on, it is worth considering that Cyber Power is a somewhat strange notion of power in the traditional sense. If "power" is the ability for A to make B do something that B would not otherwise do, than Cyber Power is only power in as far *as the other guy is networked*. What this means is that Cyber's "power" to coerce an enemy to fulfil one's will is directly proportionate to how networked that enemy is, the more he is networked, the greater the strategic relevance, and coercive capacity, of Cyber Power. If he is not networked, then Cyber Power is not a meaningful tool of strategy in the case of that enemy. Consider again the Taliban, Western Cyber Power means very little against an opponent who, by virtue of their religious beliefs shun high technology, utilise the traditional advantages of exclusive tribal societies, and fight in a guerrilla manner recognisable to fellow irregulars throughout the ages. The Taliban do not use Cyber Space, and have few, if any, assets that are even vulnerable to the application of Cyber Power. Therefore, Western Cyber Power can do very little to coerce them into accepting their will. If, however, an actor is highly networked, such as a western state, then Cyber Power holds great coercive power over elements such as the CNI, or the national economy, and so forth.

Cyber Power cannot do two things: it cannot kill directly, and it cannot occupy

This aside, Cyber Power cannot do two things: it cannot kill directly, and it cannot occupy. Regarding the first, some may counter with the assertion that paralysing an aircraft control system for civil airliners would result in death. This is probably, indeed very likely to be the case, but the fact remains that death and destruction would be an indirect consequence of utilising Cyber Power's coercive ability. Its offensive capacity relies on causing paralysis to networked systems, which is the direct consequence. If one takes a closer look at the STUXNET attacks, it will be seen that the direct consequence of the attack was to manipulate the operating software of industrial plants into different programming actions, the indirect results of this were harmful effects to the industrial components which that software was operating.[vi] It does not hold the power of coercion that the knife, the gun, the warship, and the aircraft hold. The hard elements of military power kill directly; Cyber Power will only ever be able to coerce that which is networked, whereas hard military power will always be able to coerce anything that it can come to grips with.

Cyber Power also cannot occupy in the traditional sense. One can speculate that in the Cyber realm you can hack and invade the Cyber territory of others, but strategically this means little unless it serves the political purpose for which a war is being fought. It has to be said that it looks unlikely that wars will be fought simply to occupy another's Cyber territory, if such a "territory" can even be said to truly exist. Clearly Cyber Power will never be able to exert *physical* influence in the *physical* world; it will instead influence the networked assets operating in the physical world. It cannot directly occupy, not like a soldier can dominate ground, not like an air force can harass the skies, and not like a navy can blockade a coast. Wylie issued his assumption over 40 years ago that the '*ultimate determinant in war is the man on the scene with the gun*. This man is the final power in war. He is control. He decides who wins.'[vii] Strategically speaking, Wylie remains totally correct, and probably always will, the strategic relevance of Cyber Power will always be directly proportionate to how networked one's enemy is.

The relevance of hard physical assets, however, remains beyond question.

a full strategic appreciation of Cyber Power is not only still lacking, but will remain lacking for some time

To conclude, the argument here is that a full strategic appreciation of Cyber Power is not only still lacking, but will remain lacking for some time, simply because the full capabilities of what Cyber Power can do has not yet been realised. There has simply not been enough experience of actors utilising Cyber means to attain desired political ends for the debate to be fully informed. Despite this state of affairs, three propositions as to where Cyber Power will be driven shall be issued.

Proposition one: Cyber piracy is currently leading the way. Organised criminals are currently the cutting edge of Cyber tactics; it is they who are showing us the "how" of Cyber Space. However, their contribution to strategic debate will always be limited to tactical input, for their ends are criminal, not political. Proposition two: much like the previous development of the railway networks, it can be fully expected that the commercial market and not the military will drive development of Cyber Power. It is market demand that has given growth to Cyber infrastructure; that same market will nurture, develop, and utilise Cyber infrastructures much more comprehensively, and quickly, than any military actor. Proposition three: after one and two above, strategic debate on the use of Cyber Power will remain largely theoretical until there is the experience of a war between two Cyber peers, both utilising Cyber means, for the advancement of political objectives.

Until there is a war between opponents who can attack and defend against each other with Cyber Power (be this a purely Cyber War utilising only Cyber means, or be it a war recognisable to conventional eyes simply incorporating Cyber elements), the world will remain in the realm of guesswork as to the strategic utility of Cyber Power.

Footnotes

[i] P. 146 (italics original) of Clausewitz, C. v. (1993). On War. London, Everyman's Library.

[ii] The US Army certainly takes the matter seriously enough, see Army, U. (2006). DCSINT Handbook No. 1.02: Critical Infrastructure Threats and Terrorism. Fort Leavneworth, Kansas, US Army TRADOC.

[iii] Carlin, J. (2007). "A Farewell to Arms." Wired 2007 (May).

[iv] P. 2A-4 of DCDC (2010). Joint Doctrine Note 1/10 - Intelligence and Understanding C. Development, and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), Ministry of Defence. London, Ministry of Defence: 77.

[v] The ability to obtain huge quantities of data very quickly: distribute that data through new media and old, such as his deals with the New York Times, The Guardian, and Der Spiegel: avoid a nation's legal framework by exploiting the lack of legal consensus on Cyber Space regulation.

[vi] See Broad, W. J., J. Markoff, et al. (2011, 17/01/2011). "Israeli Test on Worm Called Crucial in Iran Nuclear Delay." Retrieved 18/01/2011, 2011.

[vii] P. 72 (italics original) of Wylie, R. A., USN, J. C. (1967). Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control. Annapolis, Maryland, Naval Institute Press.

The 'narrative strategy': A politicized strategy for leaving Afghanistan

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The war in Afghanistan will end in the next few years. In straitened economic circumstances, the will of NATO countries to continue the fight is waning. The UK has already announced a firm deadline for the end of combat operations. For all the talk of 'conditions-based' withdrawal, US leaders will come under great pressure to demonstrate that their soldiers are on their way home. Given this limitation, NATO leaders must try to achieve their aims on a far shorter timeline than similar aims have been achieved in comparable conflicts. They can best attempt this by employing a strategy that focuses on public perceptions of security, and the narrative created by events in Afghanistan.

Aims

The war in Afghanistan was launched with two aims. The first aim was simple revenge: 'holding to account' those responsible for the September 11th attacks, as the language of the time put it. With the Taliban regime toppled, and many (perhaps most) senior Al-Qaeda members killed, this has largely been achieved, and the second aim has taken precedence. The second aim was to increase the security of the citizens of NATO countries. [i]

This was to be done by denying Al-Qaeda a safe haven in Afghanistan in the long term. The first half has been achieved. Members of Al-Qaeda still hide in Pakistan, and from time to time operate in Afghanistan. However, the group cannot currently organize, recruit, plan or take any of the many steps required to harm Western interests from a base in Afghanistan. The latter half of this aim has not been achieved. In order to do so, NATO has tried to build an Afghan government inimical to Al-Qaeda. This in turn has necessitated a long war against the Taliban, since they threaten to defeat this Afghan government before it can enforce its writ and fulfil its purpose of denying sanctuary to Al-Qaeda. The ambitious scale of this grand strategy has meant that it has exerted a kind of intellectual gravitational force, so that it has itself been promoted into an aim. Failure to defeat the Taliban and build the Afghan state will connote overall defeat for many of the watching parties. This is exacerbated by the extreme unpleasantness of the Taliban, and their ideological similarity to Al-Qaeda: because defeating them would be good, it is easy to see doing so as an aim.

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If Western publics perceive their states to have been defeated, they will feel less secure. Since security is not simply a function of the statistical risk of death, but also a question of perception, this will mean that NATO has failed in a key war aim. Yet as the will to fight fades and deadlines approach, it is probably not possible to defeat the Taliban and build a functioning Afghan state which controls all of its territory. Therefore, two things must happen. First, the public must be reminded that building the Afghan state, and indeed defeating the Taliban, were only ever means to an end; they must be relegated to their proper places within a wider strategy. Second, an alternative strategy must be chosen.

Reconciliation & Reintegration

The next strategy to be attempted is Reconciliation & Reintegration (R&R). This would mean making peace with significant parts of the Taliban, in return for guarantees against the return of Al-Qaeda, as well as an assortment of face-saving promises. In its most likely form, R&R would remake the Afghan state so that elements of the Taliban could rule areas of Southern Afghanistan as they wished, so long as they accepted certain requirements.

Yet R&R is not very much quicker than state-building. It requires

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years of 'hurting stalemate', without which the Taliban have no incentive to compromise. This is quite apart from the complex socialization processes involved, and is before serious talks can even begin.[ii] In Northern Ireland, famously, the UK government and the PIRA talked from 1972 until 1997.[iii] The embarrassing revelation that Coalition Forces have negotiated with a fake Taliban mediator is evidence of just how complex and confusing even beginning the process of R&R can be.[iv] R&R therefore also cannot achieve the desired aim, given the available timeframe.

The narrative strategy

Indeed, there is nothing NATO can realistically do that will alter the facts in Afghanistan sufficiently to achieve their aim, given the constraints they are under. They should therefore return to the idea of security as rooted in perception. There is insufficient will at this point to effect any strategy which will significantly alter the likelihood that NATO citizens will be killed by Al-Qaeda attacks. However, the resources are available to effect a strategy which will make them *feel* more secure. Certainly, the likelihood of a clear defeat while pursuing the current strategy would make them feel significantly less secure. The way forward, then, is to create a narrative of non-defeat for Western publics.

This 'narrative strategy' puts the reassurance of the public at its heart. It will therefore be a deeply politicized strategy. Many decisions will be taken which go against conventional military logic. It thus rests on an understanding of civil-military affairs which, following Eliot Cohen, dismisses any 'purely military' sphere of action, and asserts the right of political leaders to involve themselves in all levels of warfare.

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Underlying assumptions of the narrative strategy

The narrative strategy rests on NATO forces distancing themselves from the consequences in Afghanistan. In order to do so, it must appear to Western publics that NATO forces have successfully completed their task, and that the Afghan state they leave behind is competent and in control. This must appear to be the case at the point of departure, and also several years later.

If this strategy rests on influencing how Western publics perceive events and actors in Afghanistan, we must understand how Western publics, and the media organizations which inform them, currently perceive those events and actors, and how they perceive war in general. This understanding rests on two key postulations:

- Western publics have a limited attention span and many other concerns. They will therefore pay less than complete attention to the situation in Afghanistan. If the situation becomes too complex, or the war continues for too long, they are likely to lose interest altogether. Rupert Smith memorably captures this point in his image of the audience viewing the action through drinking straws. Consequently, much of the geography and detail of Afghanistan remains unfamiliar, and events are more newsworthy than trends.

- Western publics view war through the prism of WWII, which remains the archetypal 'good war'. Vietnam is the archetypal 'bad war', both for its own sake and because it did not follow the WWII model.[vii] This means that: 'proper' war is still fought over territory, not hearts and minds; 'proper' war is conducted by disciplined, uniformed armies; and that the apogee of war is the named battle.

Policy implications

Taking these postulations into account, there are measures that may be taken which will help separate NATO from the eventual consequences in Afghanistan. Of course, this is to assume that the consequences will be overwhelmingly negative. This is not definitely the case. With luck, the newly independent Afghan state will beat the Taliban in Southern Afghanistan and be able to in some measure target Al-Qaeda if it tries to return (or at least provide intelligence support to US special forces doing so). Yet it is best to plan on the basis that this is not so, and that the Taliban will either defeat the Afghan government by seizing Kabul, or will at least be able to take de facto control of Southern Afghanistan.

If this is the case, then the Afghan government must at least be able to hold off the Taliban for some period of time: 'a decent interval', in Kissinger's phrase. If the Taliban rule Kabul three months after NATO's departure, then the narrative strategy will have been a failure, for the public will hold NATO responsible for the defeat of the Afghan government. If, however, the Taliban arrive in Kabul after ten years of bitter and confused civil war then NATO will not be held responsible; they will be sufficiently separated from the consequences that it will not significantly affect the sense of security of their citizens.

Given the above statements about the Western understanding of war in general and the war in Afghanistan in particular, resources should focus on strengthening the Afghan National Army (ANA) rather than other arms of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). They are the most effective (and somewhat better liked) branch of ANSF, and will therefore be better able to combat and delay the Taliban. This delay will increase the distance between NATO forces and the eventual political result in Afghanistan. Equally important from a communications perspective is the Western view that the military are the appropriate actor in a traditional war. It is therefore the readiness of the ANA that will have the greater influence on Western public judgements on NATO efforts.

When Western publics judge the readiness of the ANA, fighting performance will naturally be a vital metric, and of course training in marksmanship and battle drills should not be reduced. However, some more superficial points will also form important metrics for the public. Discipline and uniform dress are two of the most immediately obvious characteristics of Western militaries, and the more the ANA resemble a Western military, the more they will be considered ready. Images of ANA soldiers smartly dressed and marching in time may be militarily irrelevant, but Western publics will be more likely

to adjudge that NATO have accomplished their role, and hence will feel more secure. Training should therefore include a greater emphasis on discipline and bearing.

The deployment of these newly trained forces should similarly be decided in line with the narrative strategy. First, in order to separate NATO from the eventual consequences in Afghanistan, ANA forces must be deployed in order to delay any Taliban advance. This will probably mean holding and protecting major transport routes. More than this, though, the perceived, 'communicated' progress of the Taliban may also be affected by the deployment of ANA troops. Since much of the geography of Afghanistan remains unfamiliar to Western publics, broad swathes of the countryside may be considered irrelevant to the narrative strategy. Key locations should be heavily garrisoned and held which have emotional value to Western publics. These should be selected because they have been the sites of NATO casualties or where NATO victories have been trumpeted, such as Marjah. If these locations are held for a significant time, Western publics will perceive that NATO forces have left behind a competent and prepared ANA, and will consequently feel more secure.

Of course, as NATO forces depart, their leverage over the Afghan government and the ANA will decrease, and it will become more difficult to dictate how they should be deployed. As Stephen Biddle noted upon the publication of U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, an inability to steer the behaviour of our Afghan partners has been a key weakness of the NATO campaign in Afghanistan. [viii] There is no complete answer to this. Naturally, NATO forces will not all leave simultaneously, and a continuing training and counterterrorism mission form a part of all suggested strategies for Afghanistan. Some leverage will therefore be preserved through the funding, special forces and airpower which the ANA lack, and the US will be willing to provide. Also of great importance will be personal relationships; senior policymakers must build close relationships with ANA leaders responsible for operational deployments over the next few years. In this context, perhaps the most important relationships will be with Brigadier General Abdul Hamid, head of 205th Corps (responsible for Kandahar, Zabul, Oruzgan, Helmand and Nimruz provinces), and his four brigade commanders. These somewhat more junior commanders are less touched by the political imperative of seeming free from Western control, and are therefore less likely to reject advice and aid out of hand.

In the meantime, NATO forces under General Petraeus are largely already acting in a manner that would support the narrative strategy. They are targeting the Taliban kinetically with an increased air bombardment. This aggressive strategy will not beat the Taliban, as counterinsurgency theorists have long been explaining, but it will degrade and inhibit them, delaying any eventual resurgence and therefore further separating NATO from the eventual consequences in Afghanistan.

NATO forces under General Petraeus are targeting the Taliban kinetically with an increased air bombardment

Conclusion

The strategy proposed above is a deeply unpalatable one. It may well condemn a great many Afghans to short, terrible lives. It would be better by far to build a fully functioning democratic Afghan state. Yet I believe that the current state-building strategy, when attempted without the necessary resources or will, leads eventually to the same bloody result, only without the limited benefits of a Western public that feels more secure. If this narrative strategy is to succeed, it will require planning and focus, and hence a hard-headed acceptance of the realities described above. Fred Snepp provides a cautionary account of the US departure from Vietnam:

'I'd been in Vietnam five and half years when the end came. It was one of the most shameful moments I've ever lived through…The reason it ended that way was wishful thinking on the part of a lot of American officials. Few wanted to admit the war was lost. So we waited too long to plan for the exit.' [ix]

Footnotes

[i] In the UK, the second aim has always taken precedence, because it was not directly attacked in the same way as was the US. Although this essay refers to NATO and ISAF, it means by these terms principally the US, since they are both the primary driving force and primary participant in the war. However, the points made will often apply to all the contributing NATO countries. Where relevant, I shall reflect differences for the UK in these notes. I have neither the space nor the expertise to accurately discuss the experiences of the Netherlands, Germany, or other participants in the war.

[ii] Brahm, Eric, 'Hurting Stalemate Stage' in Beyond Intractability, eds. Burgess, Guy & Burgess, Heidi, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, September 2003.

[iii] Taylor, Peter, Brits: The War Against the IRA, Bloomsbury, 2002, pp.118-124.

[iv] Green, Matthew, 'Fake Taliban chief dupes Nato', Financial Times, 23 November 2010.

[v] Cohen, Eliot, Supreme Command, Simon & Schuster, 2002.

[vi] Smith, Rupert, The Utility of Force, Allen Lane, 2005, pp.284-285.

[vii] In the UK, the archetypal 'bad war' is WWI. This implies some important differences. Unlike Vietnam, WWI is not bad because it broke the army, or because it conscripted a generation who wanted to be free; on the contrary, it is because discipline and enthusiasm were maintained that the slaughter continued, and the scale of the losses became so great. This implies that force protection plays a greater role for the UK than for the US; whereas the US public are most of all concerned by the success or failure of the mission, for the UK the death toll plays a greater role. This may be seen in the more extensive public commemoration of individuals in Parliament and the UK media than in the US.

[viii] Stephen Biddle, The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis, Perspectives on Politics, June 2008 (Vol. 6/No. 2), pp.347-350.

[ix] Snepp, Fred, Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End, Random House, 1977, found at King's of War, 'A decent interval: is it too much to ask?', 25 November 2010.

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