

Chapter 7

Countering Irregular Threats

*The application of purely military measures may not, by itself, restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political, or social.*²¹

Introduction

First and foremost, this is a concept about war. Conventional warfare and irregular warfare are subsets of war that exist simultaneously, to one extent or another, on every battlefield. The purpose of this concept is to describe Marine Corps operations to counter irregular threats. The term irregular threat does not ignore or re-define existing terminology—it is meant to widen the aperture through which we look for solutions. This concept is designed with two objectives in mind. First, it is intended to influence the capability development process by focusing on the challenges of countering irregular threats. Secondly, it is written to assist Marine leaders at all levels that are engaged in the execution of policy.

From a historical perspective, the ideas posited in this concept are not new. From a capability development perspective, however, they are new in that they break the focus on combined arms maneuver of mechanized forces that has predominated since the Vietnam War. This conventional focus often assumed that forces designed, trained and equipped for major combat operations against a peer competitor would be equally adept at operations to counter insurgents, guerrilla forces, and other irregular threats. Recent experience has revealed the fallacy of such assumptions. Understanding and adequately preparing for operations against irregular threats requires an intellectual investment by Marines similar to that expended by their forbearers in developing amphibious warfare capability and our maneuver warfare philosophy.

21. U.S. Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, 1940

Future Conflicts and the Nature and Theory of War

Future conflict will not be dominated by tests of strength that characterize industrial war.²² It will be dominated by wars fought among the people, where the objective is not to crush an opponent's war making ability but to influence a population's ideas and collective will. The nature of war in the 21st Century is the same as it has been since ancient times, "...a violent clash of interests between or among organized groups characterized by the use of military force."²³ The terms "organized" and "military force" refer to a group's ability to mobilize support for its own political interests and its "ability to generate violence on a scale sufficient to have significant political consequences."²⁴ These terms do not limit the participants in war to regular armies employed by a nation-state.

Clausewitz tells us that war has two natures, the "objective" and the "subjective."²⁵ Though this seems confusing, it demonstrates the dynamic nature of war. It is both constant and fluctuating. The objective represents those elements or qualities that every war has in common. The subjective refers to those qualities that change from war to war.²⁶ There is permanence to the objective nature of war that is represented in the enduring elements that all wars, large and small, share. These enduring qualities include friction, uncertainty, fluidity, disorder and danger. These qualities produce interactions that are a complex mixture of causes and effect that cannot be individually isolated or dominated by technological solutions. Though these elements of the objective nature of war are always present they vary in degree from war to war based on the political purpose of the conflict. Like the weather, certain elements are common—pressure, humidity, wind, and so forth—but they vary

22. General Sir Rupert Smith, "The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World," (United Kingdom: Allen Lane, Sept 2005.).

23. MCDP 1, Warfighting, (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps, June 1997) p. 3.

24. Ibid, p.3

25. Ibid, p. 85.

26. Antulio Echevarria, "The Trouble With History," (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Quarterly: Parameters, Summer 2005), p.138

constantly; it is the same in war.²⁷ The subjective nature of war consists of qualities that vary to a greater degree and consist of things like the political purpose of the conflict, the types of armed forces used or the weapons and tactics employed. The subjective factors are often what cause the objective to vary in degree of clarity.

War, as an aspect of politics, extends beyond the winning of battles and campaigns. Winning battles is a means to the end but does not solely drive the outcome in war. The achievement of strategic objectives in war includes military action considered in concert with all the other instruments of power and influence. In an ideal sense, the requirements of policy can lead to absolute wars or wars for more limited policy objectives. In reality, the requirements of policy may be almost infinitely various, war can surely be of any kind, not only of two.²⁸

The American Approach

History reveals that violent clashes of interests often include irregular forces or factions that exist outside the authority of established states. *War in the Shadows*, by Robert Asprey, documents over two thousand years of conflict between regular and irregular forces. In 1965, Dr. Bernard Fall described the 20th Century as “The Century of Small Wars.” He cited 48 small wars from the first 65 years of the 20th Century that, *in toto*, involved as many people and as many casualties as either one of the two world wars.²⁹ This is no insignificant point and suggests that conflicts like World War II represent both an aberration as well as a refinement of the actual tradition of war. The traditional form of war is actually more irregular.

In 1964, Bernard Fall warned “American readers... will find to their surprise that their various seemingly ‘new’ counter-insurgency gambits,

27. Analogy provided by Dr. Echevarria during an interview conducted on 20 September 2005.

28. Michael Howard, Clausewitz, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.51.

29. Bernard Fall, “The Theory and Practice of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” (Newport, RI: Naval War College Review, 1965), p.1.

from strategic hamlets to large-scale pacification, are mere rehashes of old tactics to which helicopters, weed killers, and rapid firing rifles merely add a new dimension...without changing the character of the struggle.”³⁰ Asprey, Fall, Clausewitz, and other distinguished students of war all echo the sentiment that asymmetric adaptation during war is timeless. Regardless of the actors involved, war is fundamentally a struggle between “...hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself upon the other.”³¹

The American way of war has predominantly been shaped by conflicts characterized by the use regular armies. Throughout history, states have made war against other states in what most have come to see as conventional warfare. In this sense, and particularly from the American perspective, the term “conventional” in the context of military operations has come to be synonymous with “regular” or “traditional” combat. The reality is that war will not always follow convention, and actors other than conventional combatants may engage in combat. The weak will usually look for innovative ways to attack the strong; and the strong will similarly look for ways to gain advantage over their opponents, including unconventional means.

Even American history does not reflect the argument that conventional war is the most common or even most significant, defining type of warfare.³² Regardless, throughout American history the default setting for military preparedness has derived from what was considered conventional or regular. Since World War II the U.S. military has been predominantly organized, trained and equipped to fight an enemy very much like the image it saw in the mirror. This concept will address a broader view of war beyond the microcosm of modern conventional war. It will address what the U.S. military has for some number of years termed “irregular.”

30. Robert Asprey, *War in the Shadows*, (New York, NY: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1975), p.xiii

31. MCDP 1, p. 3.

32. As exemplified by: Gen Nathanael Greene’s southern campaign of the Revolutionary War; the Indian Wars (Colonial period through late 1800s); the Philippine Insurrection 1899-1902; the Banana Wars; Vietnam; and Somalia, among others.

Irregular Threats

The term irregular is broadly used herein to refer to all types of unconventional methods of violence employed to counter the traditional capabilities of the military forces of a nation-state. Irregular threats include acts of a military, political, psychological, and economic nature, conducted by both host nation and outside actors for the purpose of undermining the authority of a local government or influencing an external power. Individuals who practice irregular methods and tactics probably do not consider themselves “irregular.” They are “irregular” from the perspective of a western nation-state such as the United States. Included in this broad category of irregular threats are insurgents, guerrillas, terrorists, and similar groups and organizations that operate in and from numerous weakened and failed states. For capability development purposes, it is useful to group them under the rubric of irregular threats because the techniques of countering such threats share some commonality.

Successfully countering irregular threats requires an understanding of the particular character of the conflict, its context, and its participants. Typically this is more difficult in a conflict with irregular threats than one with conventional forces. Insurgency begins with a cause. Conceptually, there are two elements of that cause: the underlying social environment, or “passive” element that provides the background context, and a catalyst, which is an “active” element of the cause. For instance, widespread discontent may provide a passive background that is ripe for expansion into an active insurgency and collective violence.³³ The people come to a point that they believe their situation will improve by overthrowing the existing regime or evicting an occupation force. Passive elements, however, usually do not lead directly to an insurgency. They usually require an agent to spark insurrection. In most cases, an insurgent-elite interjects the catalyst by increasing the population’s sensitivity to their disadvantaged state, or by committing overt acts, or both.

33. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 13.

Whether classified as insurgents, guerrillas, or terrorists, these individuals are usually involved in a political struggle of one sort or another against existing authority. If government authority is unable or unwilling to address real or perceived inequities, a portion of the population may resort to some form of rebellion against those in power. This usually involves attempts to “de-legitimize” that authority in the eyes of the population at large in order to bring about social or political change. For a populace to support a rebellion, they must clearly see that there is futility in continuing the social debate within the framework of the existing government. Likewise, if a government takes actions, even after a rebellion has begun, which substantially address the people’s grievances the insurgency may be undermined and the rebels ultimately convinced to work within the system. Essentially, the counterinsurgency effort works to diminish or remove the catalytic agent while also working to improve the background situation (the passive element of the cause) that fueled the rebellion to begin with.

The Security Environment and Policy Objectives

Throughout the last half of the 20th century, the United States’ national security strategy rested on deterrence in a bipolar world. The delicate stability that existed during the Cold War era was characterized by elaborate deterrence measures by the two super-powers, such as the development and fielding of robust conventional military capabilities, along with thermo-nuclear weapons and delivery systems. To avoid escalation to a war of almost unimaginable consequences, the two super-powers did not engage each other in direct combat but instead conducted a series of irregular “proxy wars.” Paradoxically, most of the U.S. military remained focused on fighting conventional wars. The collapse of the Soviet Union prompted the emergence of a more complex and unpredictable world in which the Cold War concepts of security and deterrence have less relevance.³⁴ A new security environment, wherein irregular challenges have increased, has replaced the one for which the majority of the U.S. military has been organized, trained, and equipped.

34. Max G. Manwaring, “The Inescapable Global Security Arena” (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2002), p. 3.

Though traditional threats may arise, irregular threats will likely be the predominant threat we will face in the future. Deadly violence, extremism and state failure are widespread problems in many parts of the world. The causes of modern conflict and state failure are varied but often include stagnant or deteriorating economies, weak or corrupt political institutions and intense competition over natural resources. These causes often involve ethnic, religious, political, or ideological underpinnings. Whatever the dominant theme, most conflicts take on elements of most or all of these trends and cannot be neatly slotted into one category.³⁵

The rise of transnational extremist ideologies has added a new dimension to irregular conflict. Internal or localized strife is now subject to exploitation by transnational actors. Civil discord is likely to arise in countries suffering from ethnic or religious strife, poverty, a highly unequal distribution of wealth, the vestiges of colonization, weak governmental institutions, ineffective police and military forces, and difficult terrain—conditions that allow irregular threats to thrive.³⁶ Weak or failing states often display an inability to preempt, counter or contain the cross-border activities of disaffected groups. Irregular groups that seek to undermine stability or to simply remain unmolested often have easy access to weapons and sanctuary or safe havens from which they create unrest. The gap created in a nation's ability to govern often results, ultimately, in a failed or failing state. This phenomenon can create opportunity and sanctuary for non-state actors.

Today the United States faces a transnational threat that is composed of extremist organizations with regional allies and affiliates. Many local irregular groups have existed before or in isolation from these transnational extremist organizations, and have no ideological linkages or common objective. In other cases, particularly in areas of the world

35. Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, *Conducting a Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Strategy and Program Development*, (Washington, DC: U. S. Agency for International Development, 2004), p.12.

36. Stephen D. Krasner and Carlos Pascual, "Addressing State Failure," (New York, NY: Foreign Affairs Magazine, July/August 2005)

that are historically characterized by ethnic or religious strife compounded by poverty, regional extremist organizations co-opt local groups and issues that serve their goals as well as those of their global affiliates. In doing so, these regional groups serve as intermediaries.³⁷ This global movement is made up of loosely coupled, independent movements and not a monolithic, easily template-able organization. Global players link to and exploit local players through regional affiliates who provide sponsorship and support to the local level.³⁸ This global aspect or nature to conflict adds a new dimension of complexity and may substantially complicate the effort to counter irregular threats. Our ability to operate in the “cognitive domain” represented by the intersection of complex environments, hybrid threats, many-sided views of what constitutes success, cultural predispositions, and the like will rely as much on the “non-kinetic” abilities of the MAGTF as they will on the violently “kinetic” abilities.

Some Precepts for Countering Irregular Threats

Research and analysis of doctrine, historical case studies, wargaming, and lessons learned from more recent experience in irregular conflict, has resulted in development of following precepts for countering irregular threats:³⁹

- ***Political Primacy in pursuit of objectives*** ensures that any conflict, including those that involve irregular threats, is understood as a political problem that cannot be solved through a single means.
- ***Legitimacy and the moral right to govern*** create a contract between the governed and the governors. That contract is based on an idea of governance that derives its powers from the

37. LtCol David Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency,” (Small Wars Journal web site, 30 November 2004), p.10

38. Ibid., P.10

39. This list is was developed from input provided by select participants in the Joint Urban Warrior 2005 Wargame, informed by U.S., British and Australian doctrine as well as the writings of Kitson, Thompson, Galula and Manwaring.

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consent of the governed. The government should have viable political competence that can and will manage, coordinate, and sustain security, and political, economic, and social development in a morally and culturally acceptable way.

- ***Understand*** the complex dynamics of the threat, including the wider environment. This includes understanding the causes, ideologies, aims, organizations, capabilities, methods/approaches, external support, and wider environment.
- ***Influence*** human will through the discriminate application of power (including a limitation on the use of force, especially firepower) and other means of persuasion. Supplant or preempt the ideas of the irregulars while contributing to the welfare of the society. Understand the importance of the “say-do” gap and be able to mitigate its effects.
- ***Unity of purpose*** facilitates the coordinated actions of participating agencies.
- ***Isolate*** the irregulars from their physical and moral support base. Address the conditions that permit the spread of enemy ideologies and provide a viable alternative.
- ***Patience, persistence, and presence*** with no sanctuary. Each area requires a unique approach. Normalize where possible. Do not conduct large operations unless prepared to suffocate the insurgent with the swift introduction of police and political bureaucracy.
- ***Sustained commitment to expend political capital and resources over a long period.***

Description of the Military Problem

Combat operations are rarely, if ever, singularly decisive when countering irregular threats. The U.S. military has not relinquished its conventional view of war based on conceptual thinking that was prominent immediately following World War II and reemphasized

following the Vietnam War. This conventional view is incomplete when viewed against the backdrop of the security environment the United States is likely to face for the foreseeable future. Today's military personnel struggle with conceptualizing the threat. They have difficulty developing strategies and designing campaigns that are suitable for countering irregular threats. Military personnel often focus on what they know best: combat operations. In successful conflict resolution against irregular threats, combat operations are but one of several campaign design components that must be applied in a coherent and synchronized way.

Central Idea

To be successful at effectively countering irregular threats, military personnel must view both the problem and the solution more holistically. The establishment of a secure environment in which a society can make progress, that supports the normality of that particular society, is vitally important. Security cannot be established solely through combat operations and the training and mentoring of host nation security forces. To support the establishment of stability the military, along with other government agencies and coalition partners, requires a broader appreciation of the problem that leads to intervention and the requisite solutions. Toward that end, an expanded view of campaign design must be applied. That view includes the following components: ***combat operations, training and advising host nation security forces, essential services, promotion of governance, economic development, and strategic communications.***⁴⁰ These components are not intended to be a "success template." They will require judgment in application, with the nature of each conflict demanding different emphasis and techniques associated with each component. Additionally, each intervention will require working relationships between all participants, civilian and military, American and allies, that foster unity of effort. The military must not only understand the impact that each component may have on campaign success, they must also be prepared to lead activities

40. Major General Peter Chiarelli and Major Patrick Michaelis, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full Spectrum Operations," (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Military Review, July-August 2005) p. 7.

associated with components that have not traditionally been military responsibilities.

Campaign Components

The six components listed above are intended to inform both capability development and practical application in countering irregular threats. These components will be most effective when integrated and synchronized within a situation-specific concept of operations—none exist in isolation, nor should they be planned or executed in isolation of the other components. “Success” in a singular component may, if not conducted in consonance with the other components, create a “gap” that is detrimental to overall success. The assumption must be that the enemy could exploit this “gap” if he senses it.⁴¹ For this reason, it is important to acknowledge and maintain the harmonic balance between the components. Leaders should ask themselves, “What will be the effect of this action or effort on the other components?”⁴²

These components will require the establishment of criteria for success. Assessment will play a crucial role in the operational application of this concept. Commanders at every level should make assessment a natural, integrated part of their operational activity. When dealing with irregular threats, decision-making is often extraordinarily complex, and progress may come slowly and in unusual and unexpected ways. Assessment is not a function to be performed by a staff officer at some place far removed from the action, but rather it should occur within the domain of execution, where action is specifically taking place. A continual assessment dialogue should take place between leaders at all echelons, contributing to the ongoing refinement of campaign design and execution. That assessment dialogue is based on judgment, intuition, and quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. Commanders should choose criteria carefully so that they align with, and keep subordinates focused on, the overarching purpose. Establishing criteria for success should

41. Ibid.

42. Insight provided by Ambassador Edwin Corr, telephonically, 4 Oct 2005. In that discussion, the term “lines of operation” was used instead of “campaign components.”

quite naturally lead to the development of criteria for assessment, which are normally observable outputs. Great care must be applied here, as we are often dealing with complex societal issues requiring judicious assessment criteria in order to avoid spurious conclusions. In an intervention military leaders will be predisposed toward military solutions and assessment criteria, but when countering irregular threats they will likely be secondary to political, ideological and administrative issues.⁴³ Political, economic, and social initiatives, with their respective assessment criteria, will take precedence.

These components are relevant to all six phases of the joint campaign construct, although a different emphasis may be placed on the various components during different phases. In most cases, the earlier irregular threats are addressed, the easier it will be to reach a positive conclusion. For this reason, the Marine Corps will make substantial use of forward presence via engagement to support security cooperation and counterterrorism to provide the means of proactively shaping the environment as well as to enable preemption or early intervention.

Combat Operations

Combat operations involve the purposeful application of violence, or the threat of violence, to establish dominance over an adversary or create favorable conditions within an operating environment. The combat operations required to counter irregular threats may have some similarities to conventional operations, but they also have significant differences. They are often more complex and ambiguous in nature than conventional combat operations because they occur among the people. The people are the battlefield—the objectives to be won. Combat operations take place in the presence of civilians, in defense of civilians, and against some portion of those civilians. These combat operations will pit Marines against an elusive enemy who will seek to avoid direct combat so that he can survive to strike another day. Combat operations remain an essential element in counterinsurgency campaign design, but do not provide the decisive means of achieving the political end state as they would in an industrial war.

43. Fall, p. 1.

Combat operations against irregular threats are largely focused on providing security for, and isolating the insurgents from, the population. While large operations may occasionally be necessary, they will not be the norm. Policing or constabulary activities will take precedence over killing the enemy. Large unit operations, especially those predicated on vague intelligence are generally imprecise and indiscriminant. They tend to disturb the population and are rarely able to locate the insurgent elites who provide the catalytic agent. In the end, large-unit operations can often create more animosity than positive results and thus continue to fuel the insurgency.⁴⁴ Historically, combat operations have best supported the overall counterinsurgency effort by employing small units with substantial freedom of action.

Some of the reasons for this phenomenon emanate from the greater ability of small units to act in a timely and discriminate fashion. Small units can more easily be placed close the population—“hugging” them—to establish the relationship that is essential to counterinsurgency success. Physical proximity to, and shared hardship with, the people will help establish and reinforce such relationships.⁴⁵ These relationships promote greater cultural understanding and situational awareness among military forces, and lead to better tactical intelligence. Large units ensconced in “secure” bases may provide the illusion of force protection, but they run counter to the need for establishing a positive relationship with the populace. Anything that physically or psychologically separates the intervention force from the population makes forming that relationship more difficult.

“Hugging” the population places great demands on small-unit leaders. There are few prescribed solutions for the myriad, complex, and fluid situations that will likely arise. Each of these will require timely decisions independent of a higher headquarters far removed from, and unfamiliar with, local conditions. Small-unit leaders will be forced into a dynamic environment for which they must have the skills and autonomy

44. Kalev I. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Military Review, May-June 2005) p. 10.

45. *Ibid.* p.10.

to make decisions on their own. Key capability development tasks are to develop the training, education and personnel policies that will produce small-unit leaders more capable of thriving in a complex and often chaotic operational environment, to the point that they can capitalize on that complexity and chaos to the adversary's detriment. To use a metaphor, instead of attempting the impossible act of drying up the sea of chaos, we will endeavor to make Marines better swimmers than our opponents. While some theorists, such as Mao, make great reference to the importance of focusing on the people, their writings often infer that the population is some homogeneous whole. There is great risk of oversimplification in that treatment. The reality is that most of the time factions will exist within the population. For instance, in many parts of the world the dominant social structure is ethnic or tribal. These influences will need to be understood and addressed—both in terms of dealing with the active insurgency and in planning for a lasting solution.⁴⁶ A sophisticated and complex understanding of the populace is necessary to be successful in nearly every case of intervention. “Hugging” the population often contributes key insights with respect to these factional distinctions and agendas.

Effective tactical intelligence is essential to successfully countering irregular threats. The saying that “every Marine is a collector of intelligence” is true. Simply acknowledging that fact will not be enough—existing intelligence processes and networks may need to be refined. Users (leaders at all levels who will act on the intelligence), must be the priority when forming a collection plan. The collection effort will be manpower intensive. Human intelligence will take on a dominant role and commanders may elect to form special units specifically tasked with the collection and management of this human intelligence. The success of most intervention forces in small wars has historically revolved around the intervention force's (and/or host nation government force's) ability to win the intelligence battle. The greater the fidelity and accuracy of the tactical intelligence, the better units will be at conducting timely,

46. Paul Melshen, “Tribalism and African Nationalist Wars of Liberation, 1945-80,” (Washington, DC: Center for the Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University: Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement, Vol.8, No.3, Autumn 1999), pp. 85-101.

discriminate, precise operations to counter insurgent activities. The tempo of adaptation is a crucial success factor in countering irregular threats; quality tactical intelligence promotes the ability to adapt faster and more effectively than the adversary.

When planning military support to counterinsurgency, the reinforcement of host nation military and security forces must be carefully considered. Simply introducing an increased number of combat troops to fight in a conventional manner will likely be counterproductive and result in an escalation of violence. A more successful approach usually involves a combination of preemptive and reinforcement measures.⁴⁷ Preemptive measures are those initiated within the other components to alleviate the basic causes of the insurgency.

Train and Advise Host Nation Security Forces

The Navy and Marine Corps long ago realized the crucial importance of global security cooperation. Through engagement, U.S. Naval forces will expand such cooperation with a wider set of partner nations, especially with those nations struggling to maintain or restore viable government institutions. Many of these failed or failing states are unable to provide sufficient control over their own borders, a vulnerability that is exploited by non-state actors seeking sanctuary. In such cases, security cooperation will be aimed principally at assisting these nations with the organization and training of their security forces. These security forces may include military and law enforcement organizations conducting a diverse array of activities, such as point or area defense, controlling lines of communication, coastal or riverine security, and so forth. While Special Forces have the lead for foreign military training, the scope of the problem also calls for some measure of similar capability resident among general-purpose forces.

A common pitfall associated with training foreign security forces is the temptation to remake them “in our own image.” Training for host nation forces must be designed to suit the purpose and situation of those forces,

47. Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972) p. 230.

aspiring only to the level of proficiency required to accomplish their basic mission. For example, troops involved in point security simply do not require the tactical movement skills of units involved in long range patrolling.⁴⁸ Normally, units that have proven the most effective in fighting an insurgency have focused on achieving “brilliance in the basics.” This is especially true for forces engaged in highly mobile, small- unit operations.⁴⁹

Essential Services

A key component of achieving and maintaining stability is the governing authority’s ability to ensure basic human needs are met. It is highly likely that naval forces will either support other agencies in, or perhaps even be directly responsible for, the provision of essential services such as food, power, potable water, the handling of waste, and basic medical care. A nuance here is that people residing in rural areas will likely have different needs and expectations than those living in dense urban areas. For instance, people living in a rural area may have a lower need for, and expectation of, electrical power than those living in a city. Early in an intervention, an assessment will be required to determine needs and develop a coordinated approach for meeting them. Leaders must be sensitive to how these needs may change over time, perhaps quite rapidly. They must also be sensitive to factional issues, to ensure that the provision of essential services does not have the unintended consequence of becoming a divisive issue. Another potentially counterproductive action is committing valuable and limited resources to “feel good” projects that do not support the desired the end-state.

Promote Governance

One of the most important aspects of a functioning society is the rule of law—there simply cannot be lasting stability without it. The host nation population may require assistance in the development or restoration of a functioning legal system that minimally includes civil and criminal laws,

48. Insight provided by Dr. Melshen during a presentation at MCCDC on 31 Aug 2005.

49. Sepp, p. 10.

courts, a judiciary, and the means of enforcing legal decisions, including incarceration when required. Both the judiciary and the police must enjoy the confidence of the people.

Similarly, other government institutions must be established or re-established. These may include executive or legislative bodies as well as the public administration of functions such as power, water, health, safety, communications, transportation, infrastructure, agriculture, commerce, finance, natural resources, and education. The ability of the indigenous government to deliver positive results is vital to winning the allegiance of the population. The legitimacy of the government is closely linked to performance.⁵⁰ In the early stages legitimacy may be based on what is acceptance vice ideal. An evolutionary process, the people will appreciate some measure of progress initially, and then grow to expect more as conditions improve over time. Initial arrangements should be oriented on achieving reasonable results early—and not aim for perfection right away.⁵¹

As described previously, widespread discontent may provide a passive background that is ripe for expansion into an active insurgency and collective violence. Poor economic conditions are often a primary source of such discontent. Economic development therefore constitutes a key component for effectively countering irregular threats. Improving the economic well-being of the population at large must be integrated with the other components, particularly enhancements to security and the promotion of effective governance. Note that security enhancements must be defined by the needs of the population at large, vice the narrower requirements of government institutions and activities.⁵² Before economic growth can begin to occur there must be adequate security for the population to engage in the myriad activities—farming, building, selling, trading, and so forth—that will contribute to economic growth. Agencies that oversee or coordinate such activities must similarly be effective. Further, mass unemployment, if allowed to persist for even a modest amount of time, can provide a source of discontent for

50. Max G. Manwaring and William J. Olson, editors, *Managing Contemporary Conflict; Pillars of Success*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 85.

51. Insight provided by Ambassador Corr, telephonically, 4 Oct 2005.

52. Race, p. 190.

exploitation by the insurgent elite. In many intervention cases, there must be both a short-term and long-term economic plan. The short-term objective is to find some productive way to employ a large percentage of the young and middle-aged men—if only until more enduring employment opportunities can be developed.⁵³ The long-term objective is to promote self-sufficiency, independent of direct foreign aid. This particular component represents the “staying power” of a stability effort. There can be no perception of partiality or preferential treatment, by the government or the intervention force, towards any portion of the society. Such perceptions undermine the legitimacy of the government and reinforce the discontent that helped foster the insurgency.

Strategic Communications and Information Operations

By seeking to undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the existing government, an insurgency is waging an “information war” or “battle of ideas and ideology.” The characterization of war as an extension of politics is nowhere more apparent than in small wars, which tend to have a highly nuanced and complex political character. Political struggles, by their very nature, involve competing factions vying for the allegiance and support of the people. Information is the principal means used by both sides to shape that allegiance and support.

Military forces have a role in waging the battle of ideas that is far more subtle and complex than merely assisting in the broadcast, publication or distribution of information. Complicating matters, however, is a modern information environment no longer confined by a centralized, broadcast model, one in which governments and institutions control information. Rather, today's environment represents a radical and irreversible shift in how human beings receive information, communicate, and form opinions. Emerging technologies empower the individual, allowing anyone to create content, share information and push micro-agendas to sympathetic audiences at little cost. These individuals readily filter out information that conflicts with their ideologies and biases, all the while facilitating virtual, networks based on common needs and interests - regardless of geography. These changes give our enemies new advantage in

53. Insight provided by Ambassador Edwin Corr, telephonically, 4 Oct 2005.

discrediting our actions and building support for their causes. They also make it increasingly more difficult for the Marine Corps to be heard, understood, and believed. All actions related to campaign components must be planned and implemented with due consideration for how they will be perceived by the population. They must also be carefully considered with respect to how the insurgents might distort information about those actions in order to manipulate public opinion. We need to ask ourselves, “What is it that we ideally want civilians to do in terms of desired collective behavior?” The answer to that question should help shape campaign design. The information war is a means to morally isolate the insurgents from the population. As one expert noted from the French Algerian experience, “...one of the main weapons of anti-insurgent warfare is to find and magnify internal differences.”⁵⁴ This moral isolation extends beyond the borders of the country in which Marine Corps forces are involved. External support can have moral and political aspects, and information operations should be deliberately aimed at isolating the insurgents from this external support.⁵⁵ Ultimately, for a counterinsurgency to be successful, the indigenous population has to come to the point where it views the insurgents as the outsiders or outlaws.⁵⁶

A critical restriction in waging the information war is that deception should be limited only to employment against the enemy. Deception is a useful tool in combat operations against the insurgents, but it is never a good idea to lie to the populace in the name of the government.⁵⁷ Credibility and perceived legitimacy are critical elements of an indigenous government’s ability to counter rebellion, achieve stability, and function effectively. Ultimately, the perceptions held by the populace are more important than reality in the government’s struggle for legitimacy.⁵⁸ Care must be exercised to do nothing that will undermine

54. Edgar O’Balance, *The Algerian Insurrection; 1954-1962*, (London, UK: Faber, 1967), p. 205.

55. O’Neill, pp. 114-115.

56. John A. Lynn, “Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center: Military Review, July-August 2005) p. 27.

57. Col Napoleon Valeriano, AFP (Ret.) and Lieutenant Colonel Charles T.R. Bohannon, AUS (Ret.), *Counter-Guerrilla Operations; the Philippine Experience*, (New York, NY: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962), p.143.

58. Manwaring and Olson, p. 85.

the perceived legitimacy of the United States or the host nation government it supports.

Perceived legitimacy is so vital to the ultimate success of nearly every intervention activity that it cannot be relegated to an afterthought. One vital aspect to achieving and maintaining some measure of perceived legitimacy is moral rectitude in all endeavors. Through morally upright conduct, particularly in dealing with civilians and prisoners, Marines can avoid stimulating the recruitment of new insurgents and may even benefit from valuable intelligence. A lack of rectitude will have a negative effect that will be exploited by enemy information operations.⁵⁹

A lack of rectitude will also adversely impact the support of the American people for a given intervention. Small wars are typically protracted in nature, with progress toward broadly defined goals often slow and hard to measure. Domestic support for an intervention is often difficult to maintain over the long term. There is a close relationship between the amount of support that the American public is prepared to afford an intervention and the degree of legitimacy and efficiency demonstrated by the host nation government and the U.S. forces supporting it.⁶⁰

The Lessons of History

The ideas presented in this concept are the result of extensive historical research and assessment. Though there is always a risk of oversimplification when an attempt is made to summarize historical lessons, there are, nevertheless, some clear points to bring out which can help future Marine leaders enhance their chances of success in small wars. First, security of the population is the paramount role of military forces. The force used to provide security may not be the force used to apply pressure to the insurgent military forces. While combat operations

59. Max G. Manwaring and Anthony James Joes, editors, *Beyond Declaring Victory and Coming Home: The Challenges of Peace and Stability Operations*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000) p. 61.

60. Sam C. Sarkesian, *America's Forgotten Wars: The Counterrevolutionary Past and Lessons for the Future*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984) p. 9.

and the training of security forces are of vital importance, in nearly every historical example success in the other components proved to be at least as important. Moreover, these components cannot be tackled sequentially, but must be addressed concurrently. The insurgents had to be physically and morally separated from the populace in order for the host nation government or the intervention force to achieve any meaningful, long-term success. At various times Marine Corps forces may be called upon to perform or support activities associated with all six components, but in all cases they should do so by leveraging the core competencies of the other government agencies involved.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps has a rich and colorful history of success in “small wars.” Largely overlooked in recent years, the changing security environment has resulted in a resurgence of interest in the lessons learned during those hard years of small war campaigning. Given the Commandant’s guidance that irregular wars will characterize the foreseeable future, that trend must continue in a more formalized way. Though the Marine Corps will remain a multi-purpose force, its focus will shift more toward to what Rudyard Kipling called “the savage wars of peace.”⁶¹ In order to realize some of the points proffered in this concept, an extensive capability analysis must consider the implications for the force. Additionally, the Marine Corps will expand its operational continuum and improve its ability to support, or in some cases perform, all the components listed above, even as it acknowledges that combat operations and the training of other nations’ militaries and security forces will be its principal focus. Our capability development initiatives and operational practice must understand and maintain the harmonic balance between the components.

61. Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), p. xiv.