Challenges in Fighting a Global Insurgency

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"War is . . . an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."
— Carl von Clausewitz[1]

The strategic nature of war has changed, and our military and government are striving to adapt to fight and win in this new environment. Today we are engaged in a global counterinsurgency, an unprecedented challenge which requires a level of original strategic thought and depth of understanding perhaps comparable only to that of the Cold War. Our ongoing political-military actions to achieve success in Iraq and Afghanistan are simply subordinate efforts of this larger, complex world war.

Our enemies today clearly understand the value of asymmetrical approaches when dealing with the overwhelming conventional combat power of the United States military. Unfortunately, our unmatched conventional capability has slowed the US response to the changing, asymmetrical nature of modern war.[2] We as a military are at risk of failing to understand the nature of the war we are fighting—a war which has been characterized as "a war of intelligence and a war of perceptions."[3] We must confront this dilemma and take our thinking to a new strategic level in this era to understand the tools and strategic approaches required to create victory in this very different 21st-century environment.

Fourth Generation Warfare: Global Insurgency

Retired Marine Colonel T. X. Hammes, in his recent book *The Sling and the Stone*, outlines an innovative construct to better understand the evolu-

tion of warfare.[4] The book's striking cover photo epitomizes the paradox in today's warfare of "weak against strong": it shows a young Palestinian boy, arm upraised, about to hurl a rock at a huge, US-made Israeli M60 tank. The shades of meaning are rich. In his insightful work, Hammes describes four evolutions of warfare, which he characterizes as First through Fourth Generation War. This theory is helpful as we examine the context of war today and assess the effectiveness of today's military to engage in—and win—these wars. Hammes' description provides us an alternative model to compare with our current "network-centric" model of war, which often seems primarily designed for nation-states engaged in force-on-force battles.[5]

First Generation Warfare in this alternative construct dates from the invention of gunpowder, which produced the first military formations and tactics cued to firearms. First Generation Warfare was an offensively-oriented type of war, where light weaponry, limited-size armies, and horse and foot mobility provided very limited strategic mobility—armies walked everywhere—but some modest tactical mobility, with small armies unencumbered by extensive heavy weaponry. This era culminated in the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s, and warfare began to change dramatically by the middle of the 19th century. By the time of the US Civil War, the advent of advanced transportation and communications systems, combined with heavier mobile firepower, signified the emergence of a new model—Second Generation Warfare.

Second Generation Warfare revolved around rapidly growing strategic speed of communication and transport—telegraphs and railways—in concert with massed armies armed with ever-deadlier small arms and artillery. This phase encompassed the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870s, the turn-of-the-century Boer War and Russo-Japanese conflicts, and ultimately the huge, million-man armies of World War I. The latter were massive formations linked to devastating direct and indirect firepower, leading inexorably to the strategic and tactical stalemate of trench warfare. Second Generation Warfare was characterized by large armies with strategic (but limited tactical) mobility, unprecedented weaponry and explosive "throw weight," resultant heavy casualties, and gradual diminishment of maneuver, all of which pointed toward the defense achieving gradual dominance over the offense.

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In response to this battlefield paralysis, Third Generation Warfare emerged in the 1920s and 30s and produced "blitzkrieg" and the age of maneuver warfare, with the offense once again gaining supremacy. This era of mounted mechanized maneuver continued from World War II through the Arab-Israeli wars of the 1950s and 60s, included Desert Storm in 1991 (perhaps its zenith), and culminated with the race to Baghdad in March 2003. (Excursions into counterinsurgency conflicts in places like French Indochina, Algeria, Malaya, Vietnam, and the two Intifadas in Israel not only failed to significantly affect mainstream military thinking, but they often turned out rather badly for Western armies.) Today, after 40 years of Cold War experience and billions of dollars spent on weapon system investments, the United States and most Western militaries remain optimized for Third Generation Warfare, reflecting nearly 50 years of tactical, operational, and strategic thought and resource commitments originally designed to contain and deter the Soviet threat, and if necessary to defeat a Warsaw Pact armored invasion of Western Europe.[6]

Hammes contends that we have now entered into the age of Fourth Generation Warfare, which he brands "netwar." (The term is a bit confusing given the better-known "network-centric operations" terminology.[7]) Fourth Generation Warfare "uses all available networks—political, economic, social, and military—to convince the enemy's political decisionmakers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. *It is an evolved form of insurgency.*"[8] Fourth Generation Warfare argues that the enemy's target becomes the political establishment and the policymakers of his adversary, not the adversary's armed forces or tactical formations. The enemy achieves victory by putting intense, unremitting pressure on adversary decisionmakers, causing them to eventually capitulate, independent of military success or failure on the battlefield. Fourth Generation Warfare deserves to be studied closely by the military, primarily because it outlines a compellingly logical way to look at asymmetrical warfare, a challenging topic for Western militaries.

Competing Paradigms of War

Another way to view the challenge we face with an asymmetrically-oriented enemy is to examine our current warfighting construct: the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, often represented as a triangle, as shown in Figure 1 on the following page. At the base is the tactical level where engagements and battles are fought, entailing direct combat actions ranging from squad to brigade echelon. The tactical level is the stage at which the vast preponderance of our troops and equipment are committed and engaged daily. The second level, the center of the triangle, is the operational level. At this echelon,
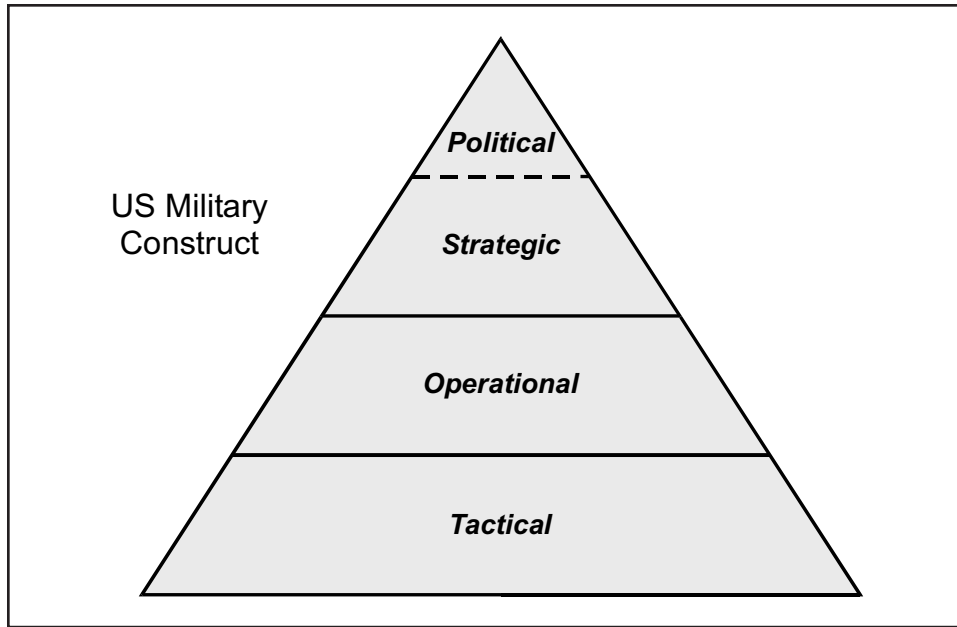
Figure 1. The US military construct for the levels of war.

campaigns are developed which give shape to the battles and connect them in ways that ultimately lead to campaign, and eventually strategic, success. Next, most often displayed at the top of the triangle, is the strategic level where policymakers lay out the broad political-military goals and end-states which the operational campaigns are designed to serve.[9]

This model represents an accepted view of modern warfare which has become largely institutionalized as the warfighting paradigm within the US military since the Vietnam War. In fact, the addition of the operational level of war was perhaps the most significant change in US military doctrine to emerge as the military's direct response to the largely unexamined lessons of Vietnam.[10] Of note is a distinct "political" level, often omitted from this paradigm, which rightfully belongs at the apex. This top-most position reflects recognition of the "grand strategic" level but also acknowledges the inherent purpose that lies beyond the purely military character of war and its intended results—results that are often if not always political in nature.[11] Students of war and military professionals overlook the political level in our paradigm of warfare at great risk.

Arguably, Figure 1 also represents the investment balance of organizational effort within the US military as it prepares for and thinks about war. Doctrine, organization, training, leadership, materiel, personnel, and facilities are weighted heavily toward the tactical level—the large base of the triangle—with proportionally much less effort assigned to the operational

and strategic levels. A cursory look at defense spending will identify that by far the greatest amounts of both procurement and future research and development are allocated for tactical-level requirements.[12] Tanks, helicopters, fighter planes, individual body armor, assault amphibians, cruise missiles, munitions of all sorts, unmanned aerial vehicles, "littoral combat ships"—all provide the combat power to fight and win battles at the tactical level. Unfortunately, winning more tactical-level battles in an era of Fourth Generation Warfare does not lead inevitably to winning the war. In point of fact, with more and more responsibility for the operational and strategic levels of war shifting to joint organizations—a byproduct of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act—the military services have become more tactical in their focus, charged to "organize, train, and equip" rather than to "fight and win." Service jargon is replete with references to "warfighting," but rarely speaks of the vastly more important "*war-winning*." The decisive strategic responsibility of "winning our wars" has been largely shifted away from the services toward others in the "joint world" with far shallower institutional, intellectual, and resource foundations. This is a little-recognized development with complex implications when fighting a global "long war."

The Insurgent Paradigm

Ironically, our enemies in this "long war" may have developed their own version of our paradigm of warfare. Assessing the enemy's efforts over the past five years, one could argue that they are employing the same construct and levels of war, but with the orientation reversed—apex low, base high, as shown in Figure 2, on the following page. Al Qaeda and their associated elements—the "global insurgents"—have clearly chosen to place their foremost effort at the top: the political and strategic level. They appear to understand and seem to be employing Hammes' concept of Fourth Generation Warfare. Their political-strategic targets are the decisionmakers and influencing elites in the United States and in the global community. Their operational level works to string together minor tactical engagements (often carefully chosen) via global media coverage to create international strategic and political effects. Their lowest dollar investment, unlike ours, is at the tactical level, where improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers carry their strategic freight with great effect. Their command and control system is the internet, the laptop, the courier, and the cell phone, drawing on technologies which were invented and paid for by their adversaries in the developed world. Their intelligence system does not rely on satellites or unmanned aerial vehicles, but commonly upon human sources inside our bases and near our operational units, employing a family, tribal, or ethnic-based network that is impenetrable to Westerners. Their biggest operational weapon is the global information grid, particularly the inter-
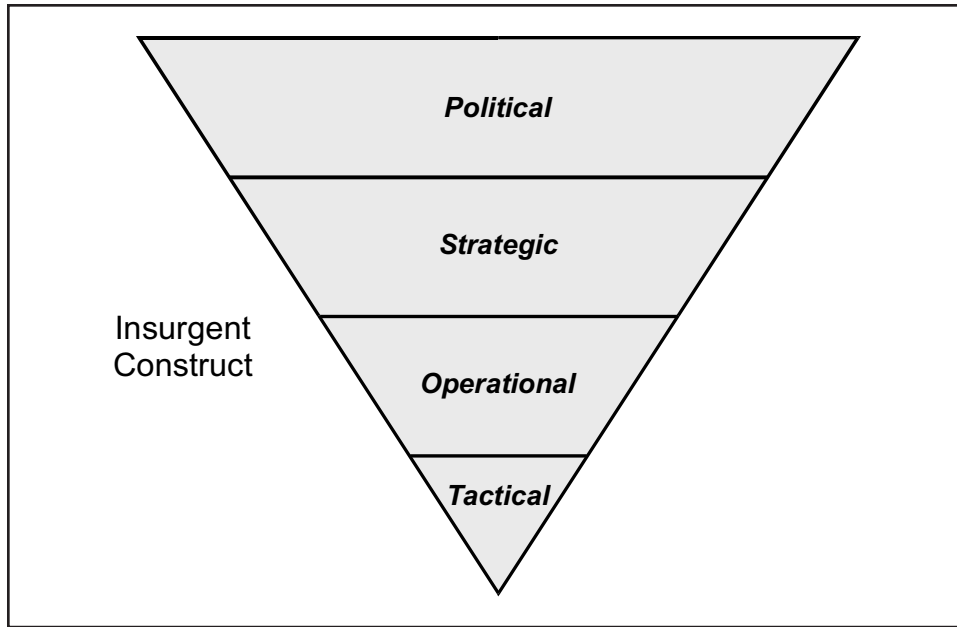
Figure 2. The insurgent construct for the levels of war.

national media. Indeed, the media are a weapon system of "mass effect" for the terrorist to achieve his strategic and political "grand strategy" objectives, and he relishes the fact that we rightly cherish and protect both our freedom of speech and an adversarial media as central tenets of one of our most important freedoms, because it aids him immensely in pursuing his strategic goals.

An interesting example of the terrorists' sophistication in blending these levels occurred in March 2005 in Afghanistan. One evening in the area of the Afghan-Pakistan border near Khowst, a major enemy attack began to develop. Three border checkpoints controlled by Afghan forces came under mortar and ground attack, and at the same time, two US sites which hosted reinforcing artillery and attack helicopters also were hit with rockets. One Afghan border post was pressed hard by more than 100 enemy fighters. Despite the unprecedented nature of this nighttime, five-point coordinated attack, Afghan forces fought back well, and in concert with attack helicopters and timely artillery support, they repulsed the border-post attacks and inflicted many enemy casualties. This attack occurred with no apparent advance warning during a traditionally quiet winter period in a rugged mountainous region of the country. What made it particularly notable was that it coincided precisely with Afghan President Hamid Karzai's first official state visit to meet with his Pakistani counterpart, President Pervez Musharraf, in Islamabad—and that early in the morning following the attack, an Al Jazeera news crew suddenly drove up to the point of the main attack in this very remote part of

the border to capture what they obviously expected to be a very different outcome on film. Clearly, this enemy understands the political and strategic level of a global insurgency.

General John P. Abizaid, commander of US Central Command, has described the war against al Qaeda and their associated movements as "a war of intelligence and a war of perceptions."[13] Both aspects present enormous challenges for the United States and our Coalition friends and allies. Our intelligence systems and capabilities are among the most sophisticated and expensive in the world, but their ability to give us credible insight into the minds and planning of our adversaries remains problematic. The war of perceptions—winning a battle of ideas, influencing other cultures, countering the virulent message of hate and intolerance promoted by our enemies—is a bitter conflict fought out every day in an environment of 24/7 news coverage and a continuous global news cycle. Both of these crucial battlegrounds remain arenas where the West and the United States face serious challenges and are often swimming against the tide in a complex foreign culture.

Intelligence: The "80/20 Rule" and "Boiling Frogs"

Clausewitz observed that "many intelligence reports in war are contradictory, even more are false, and most are uncertain."[14] What military intelligence officer today would publicly stand up and endorse Clausewitz's admonition during a senior-level intelligence briefing? Yet the assertion that intelligence reports tend to be contradictory, false, and uncertain represents intelligence realities. To the contrary, the 40-year Cold War gave us powerful capabilities and unprecedented levels of confidence in our modern intelligence systems. At the height of this half-century conflict, we had devised technological solutions to our intelligence challenges which surpassed any capabilities previously known in the history of conflict. From the modest successes of the U2 surveillance aircraft program (brought into high profile after the 1962 shootdown of Francis Gary Powers over the Soviet Union), the United States designed, built, and deployed a comprehensive satellite surveillance program which ultimately provided unprecedented overhead access to historically denied territories around the world. Listening posts dotted the periphery of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). A human spy network behind the Iron Curtain provided uniquely sensitive information. After four decades of primary focus on a fixed enemy, our intelligence capabilities became singularly optimized to peer at ICBM fields, observe submarine fleet anchorages, scan bomber-packed airfields, monitor Warsaw Pact tank divisions, and—with a network of spies—look deep inside the Soviet governmental and military bureaucracies.

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Our human intelligence penetration of the USSR was significant and priceless, tragically revealed by the betrayals of numerous American agents by Soviet moles Aldrich Ames inside the CIA and Robert Hanssen inside the FBI.[15] The ideological power of our Western influence as functioning and prosperous democracies of free people gave us leverage in recruiting Soviet citizens to spy on their own country, a "Free World" ideological advantage noticeably absent in penetrating terrorist networks today. Billions of dollars were devoted to these holistic intelligence efforts, and the results were clearly impressive. One could unscientifically estimate that a US President sitting down to his daily intelligence briefing in the 1960s, 1970s, or well into the 1980s could have perhaps an 80-percent confidence level in the veracity and completeness of the intelligence picture painted on at least the Soviet Union, our most dangerous opponent. The existence of an aggressive foreign power with the largest nuclear arsenal in the world aimed at the United States was a powerful incentive for massive spending on intelligence and unsparing efforts to discern not only the capabilities, but the intentions, of this prime adversary.

As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate in the late 1980s, however, our intelligence system remained largely unchanged. Presidents continued to get their daily worldwide intelligence briefings, but gradually the levels of confidence and certainty in the picture began to slip from the peak Cold War performance levels of an optimized system. It was a slip unnoticed by the participants, and perhaps by the briefers as well. Institutional momentum and past successes kept investments steady or growing in high-technology systems, and one can surmise that satellites and other overhead collectors continued to receive robust resourcing.

But in comparison to the perhaps 80-percent confidence level in the accuracy of the products against the Soviets, our level of confidence in today's intelligence products against an obscure worldwide enemy network ought to perhaps be more like 20 percent. In an environment of global insurgency, fighting a loosely organized worldwide terrorist network enabled by modern technology, a movement based upon twisted religious interpretations and playing upon feelings of economic and political inadequacy in a world racing toward globalization in all aspects of life, our technology-dependent

intelligence system is operating at a huge disadvantage. Our enemy has no ICBM fields, no submarine pens, no tank divisions, and no standing governmental or military bureaucracy to penetrate. Aside from cars, trucks, and motorcycles, he has no "platforms," yet most of our costly intelligence tools tend to be optimized to find and report on just that. Acquiring high-value human intelligence continues to be extremely difficult, and penetrating a closed culture with intense internal loyalties and a strong bias toward family and tribal lines is immensely tough.

Most important, though, our military leaders and commanders today have to recalibrate their thought processes to better understand what they are seeing and what they are not. In my experience, no intelligence officer worth his or her salt will give a senior leader an intelligence briefing without crisp certainties in the conclusions. In fact, in our military we expect and demand the intelligence officer, the "G2," to take a defined stance, to tell us definitively what the enemy is going to do. Again, in the Cold War era, the West had multiple overlapping and redundant means of detecting, assessing, and confirming key intelligence findings. In today's environment, operating against a shadowy terrorist network distributed globally in loosely aligned autonomous cells, our ability to have any significant degree of confidence in our intelligence certainty should be very much in question and viewed with extreme skepticism. In my estimation, we simply do not know what, or how much, we do *not* know. We're back to the world of Clausewitz. What was an 80-percent certainty during the Cold War is now 20 percent—this is "the 80/20 Rule" of modern intelligence.

The "Boiling Frog" theory characterizes another intelligence challenge that bedevils our professionals: the tyranny of short time horizons. When fighting an enemy who views time in decades or generations, Americans—perhaps particularly those fighting overseas on one-year tours of duty—are at a great disadvantage. We live in a "microwave society" of instant results, and our trend analysis in counterinsurgency operations reflects this. During 2003-2005 in Afghanistan, our "long-term" time comparisons were inevitably to events just one year prior. We essentially had no data from 2001 or 2002 for a variety of reasons—early-stage operations, inadequate records keeping, staff turnover—so our longitudinal assessment of the counterinsurgency was at best a one- to two-year comparative look.

My US military intelligence team in Afghanistan dreaded the inevitable question: "Are we the boiling frog?" Legend has it that a frog placed in a shallow pot of water heating on a stove will remain happily in the pot of water as the temperature continues to climb, and will not jump out even as the water slowly reaches the boiling point and kills the frog. The change of one degree of temperature at a time is so gradual that the frog doesn't realize he is being

boiled until it is too late. Our limited Western time horizons often precluded any serious look at a ten-year (much less a 25-year) timeline to discern the long-term effect of our policies, or a long-term comprehension of what the enemy might be attempting, ever so slowly. This is a significant risk to any Western intelligence system, perhaps most so with Americans and our perceived "need for speed." In a culture of generational conflicts, centuries-old tribal loyalties, and infinite societal and family memories, we are at a significant disadvantage.

The War of Perceptions: Information Operations

Clausewitz also wrote that war "is a trial of moral and physical forces through the medium of the latter. Naturally, moral strength must not be excluded, for *psychological forces exert a decisive influence on the elements involved in war.*"[16] The counterinsurgency campaign waged in Afghanistan from late 2003 until mid-2005 was underpinned by information operations. Unfortunately, in a war of ideas, our ability to influence ideas and shape perceptions as Westerners briefly transplanted into this remote, isolated region of the world with an infinitely different culture was an enormous challenge. As Westerners and Americans, we tended to be linear and impassive thinkers focused on quick solutions—operating in a foreign world of nuance, indirection, and close personal relations tied to trust, with extended time horizons. The Taliban often reminded villagers: "The Americans may have all the wristwatches, but we have all the time."

Our US information operations doctrine was designed for a different era and in many ways simply did not fit the war we were fighting. It doctrinally bundled together "apples, oranges, pianos, Volkswagens, and skyscrapers" into one package—psychological operations, operational security, military deception, offensive and defensive computer network operations, and electronic warfare.[17] This official collection of disparate conceptual entities did little to assist us in our struggle to understand and operate in a war that was ultimately about winning hearts and minds, and about keeping our side resolutely in the fight.

The enemy instinctively seemed to understand how to exploit the media (international and local), tribal customs and beliefs, rumors and cultural predispositions toward mystery and conspiracy, and a host of other subtle but effective communications. Al Qaeda and the Taliban targeted their messages to influence both decisionmakers and ordinary people—in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in the Gulf region, in Europe, in the United States, and across a global audience. A blatant lie or obviously false claim by the Taliban would resonate throughout the cultural system of Afghanistan down to every

valley and village, and it would be next to impossible to subsequently counter such falsehoods with facts. In a tribal society, rumors count, emotions carry huge weight, the extreme seems plausible, and "facts" reported outside the trusted confines of family, village, and tribe are subject to great skepticism. This "local" phenomenon carried weight throughout the region and is arguably the norm across much of the Islamic world.

The deadly outbursts in Afghanistan following the ultimately false reports of American desecration of the Koran at Guantanamo demonstrated the emotional power of "breaking cultural news." Widespread rioting and protests across the Muslim world after the publication in Europe of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad reflect the same powerful and emotional cultural-religious phenomenon. Messages from "the West" were often viewed with inherent suspicion, simply because they were from outsiders. We worked hard to overcome these difficulties, mostly through exercising the most effective information operations technique—having a good story to tell, and always telling the truth.

The public affairs component of this strategy deserves some discussion. In late 2004, General Richard Myers, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, published a directive message explicitly separating public affairs from information operations in the US military, and he articulated some very powerful reasons why this separation should be so.[18] US public affairs officers around the world cheered, but many commanders cringed. The work of winning a "war of ideas" was not made any easier for deployed commanders, but Myers' point was a valid one—the recognition that we waged 21st-century warfare in the "spin zone" of both international media and domestic politics could not permit or excuse an environment where facts might be changed or reporters manipulated to deliberately create false perceptions.

The line remains a fine one for commanders. In an environment where the enemy leverages global media to get out a recurrent message of hopelessness and despair, of carnage and fear, how do military leaders counter the overwhelming impression that all the victories are on the enemy's side? How do we overcome the perception that every bombing or ambush resulting in American casualties signifies that we are "losing"? As some pundits have noted, if Americans at home had been able to watch the 1944 D-Day invasion of Normandy in real time on CNN from the first wave at Omaha beach, there would have been little hope in the public mind that the Third Reich would surrender just 11 months later! Some Americans might have clamored for a negotiated settlement. But no one in the global audience in 1944 viewed Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan as the "moral equivalents" of the Allies, nor did any news organization in the West report on World War II as though it was a neutral observer at a sporting event. The Allies against the

Axis was not a game show where the outcomes were unimportant to the average citizen, and the news media did not report on it as though they were neutral about the results.

It's increasingly apparent that this "values-neutral" approach and largely detached moral position prevail across much of the international (and US) media today. Are the bloody terrorists who decapitate innocent hostages on camera morally equivalent to the democratically elected governments of the United States and Great Britain? Are they as deserving of empathy and respect as the freely elected leaders in Afghanistan and Iraq? Some media outlets—and not insignificant numbers of citizens in the Muslim world—would contend it is so. We do not have to agree with these chilling perceptions to register them and to reflect seriously on what measures are required to reverse them. The painful implications of this set of arguably common Islamic perceptions should give us pause. Is nothing commonly reprehensible to all peoples? All these complexities of perception and culture are alive in a 24/7 news-cycle world of instant communications, and they utterly change the dynamics of fighting and winning a war against a global insurgency today.

Finally, a growing phenomenon subtly capitalized on by our terrorist enemies is the instant politicization of distant battlefield events (especially reverses) in the American political process here at home. There are surely disturbing echoes of the bitter political contentiousness of Vietnam in today's party-centric debates over the nature and strategy of this war, but that debate also reflects a healthy symptom of politics in a free society. That said, it is unfortunate that in an era of continuous electoral politics, somehow *successful* activities in this war—from battles won to elections held to civil affairs projects completed—seem to be scored as "wins" for the present Administration, while tactical setbacks, bombings, heavy casualties, or local political reverses are construed as "losses," and seem to somehow be twisted to add to the political capital of the opposition party. Although largely unintentional, this perverse situation is flat-out wrong, and it does a disservice to our fighting men and women in harm's way. Wars should always supercede "politics

as usual," especially in an age of Fourth Generation Warfare with the enemy deliberately targeting decisionmakers on the home front as part of its premeditated strategy. There was a time in American politics, especially in time of war, when politics stopped at the water's edge and our friends and enemies alike saw a unified, bipartisan approach to foreign policy from American elected leaders. In the current "long war," fought out 24/7 under the bright lights of continuous talk shows, and where resolve, staying power, and American and allied unity are the very principles that the enemy is desperately trying to undermine, that once respected bipartisan principle in our foreign policy needs to be recaptured.

Conclusion: Our Strategic Challenge

Strategy in a global counterinsurgency requires a new level of thinking. A world of irregular threats and asymmetrical warfare demands that we broaden our thinking beyond the norms of traditional military action once sufficient to win our wars. The focus of this global insurgency of violent Islamist extremism exploits the concepts of Fourth Generation Warfare with a calculated assault on perceptions at home, on our decisionmakers and on the public. In a war of intelligence and a war of perceptions, we grapple to understand how to best devise a war-winning strategy given the predominantly conventional warfighting tools in our military toolbox—and our vulnerabilities outside the military sphere. Realities are that an unbroken series of tactical military victories in today's war, the primary focus of our Army and Marine Corps, will not assure strategic success, yet our conventional military organizations and service cultures seem increasingly tactical. An effective strategy does not result from the aggregate of an unlimited number of tactical data points. Commanders assert, "We simply cannot be defeated militarily in this war." That may be true, but this statement masks the fact that we *can* potentially be defeated by other than purely military means.

How big is our concept of war? With our enemies committed to an unlimited war of unlimited means—al Qaeda will clearly use a nuclear weapon against the United States if it gains the means—how can we continue to regard this fight as a limited war and keep our focus chiefly on accumulating an unbroken series of battlefield tactical successes which we somehow think will collectively deliver victory? How do we justify our military services' institutional fixation with accruing more and more tactical capability in the face of an enemy which places no value on tactical engagements except to achieve his strategic and political objectives? Where do we best invest our future defense dollars to gain leverage over this new "global insurgent," an enemy with no tanks, no air force, no navy, and no satellites? What type of provoca-

tion will it take for Americans to fully commit to a "long war" against an enemy who is engaged in a war without limits against us? And what does an all-out "long war" mean for America within the ethical and moral values of our nation in the 21st century?

Many of these questions are beyond the scope of this article, but they point to the complex dimensions of understanding the nature of the war we fight today—a Fourth Generation War—and the means required for us *to win*. As a military charged with fighting this new type of war, a global insurgency, we must better grasp ownership of the fight. In some sense, as society's trustee in the conduct of our nation's wars, we must accept the full range of war, tactical to strategic level. After all, winning wars—and preventing them—are the only reasons our military exists. If we as a nation or a member of a coalition are ultimately defeated by our enemies, the reasons for that defeat—whether military, political, or economic—will be far less important than the result. We must more fully leverage all the intellectual as well as physical capabilities inside our military to assure such a defeat remains unthinkable. We need to contribute more directly toward a comprehensive strategy leading to long-term victory. Battlefield victories result from good tactics, training, and leadership; strategic victories result from thinking through the right strategy and executing it aggressively. Our military should be the repository of the deepest reservoirs of strategic thinking on winning our wars—of any type. But for our military to deny that an asymmetric defeat at the strategic level is even possible in this unconventional war is the equivalent of burying our heads in the sand and increases our risk.

While protecting against tactical or operational-level defeat on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, our military needs to also guard against the dangers of strategic-level defeat. This is not just "someone else's problem." We need to understand the nature of the war we are fighting, and we need to avoid the temptation to define our war as the *tactical* battle we would like to fight rather than the *strategic* fight we are in with a thinking enemy who strikes daily at our national political will here at home.

The military's role in addressing this asymmetrical "war of wills" is hyper-sensitive. This predicament is a very real problem inherent in 21st-century warfare, and the military needs to understand and support the civilian leadership in defending this flank. Bipartisan recognition and defense of this Achilles' heel is also necessary to deprive our enemies of its effect. America's military contribution needs to evolve toward designing a war-winning series of campaigns and, perhaps even more important, helping our civilian leadership to craft the broad political-military grand strategy necessary to succeed against a dangerous and resourceful enemy in this "long war." We as a military must fully understand, accept, and take ownership of "war-winning" as well as

"war-fighting" if we are to fulfill our role in defending the society we are pledged to serve. If this conflict is truly a "long war" against violent global extremism, against an ideology of hate and destruction as dangerous as fascism in the 1930s and communism in the 1950s, then we as a military have to take on the institutional and intellectual challenges to fight and to win this very different war against a determined and dangerous enemy.

NOTES

1. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 75.

2. Asymmetrical warfare in this context is best described as the means by which a conventionally weak adversary can fight and win against the conventionally strong opposite number. The term "insurgency" in this article describes irregular warfare characterized by unconventional elements battling against a prevailing or established order.

3. General John P. Abizaid, personal conversation with the author, 2004.

4. Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, Minn.: Zenith Press, 2004). This is perhaps the most original book on present-day warfare in an era of weaker powers battling conventionally strong adversaries via asymmetrical approaches. Hammes casts serious doubt on the notions of technology, information, and speed of decisionmaking as effective attributes in dealing with an insurgent enemy.

5. Arthur K. Cebrowski and John J. Gartska, "Network Centric Warfare: Its Origins and Futures," *Proceedings*, January 1998.

6. Hammes, pp. 16-31.

7. Cebrowski and Gartska. "Network-centric operations"—much different from Fourth Generation netwar—describes a theory of war which argues in effect that rapid war-winning results can be rendered by speed of decisions and actions produced by centralized networks of communications, intelligence, and command and control.

8. Hammes, p. 2. Italics added.

9. US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington: GPO, 2005). The tactical level of war is defined as, "The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces." The operational level is, "The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas." The strategic level is, "The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to accomplish those objectives."

10. Harry R. Summers, *On Strategy*: *A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1981).

11. The essence of grand strategy is described by Colonel John Boyd (USAF Ret.) as to "shape pursuit of the national goal so that we not only amplify our spirit and strength (while undermining and isolating our adversaries) but also influence the uncommitted or potential adversaries so that they are drawn toward our philosophy and are empathetic toward our success." Boyd, "Patterns of Conflict," briefing, December 1986, slide 140, http://www.d-n-i.net/boyd/pdf/poc.pdf.

12. US Congress, *Fiscal Year 2006 National Defense Authorization Act*, H. R. 1815 (Washington: GPO, 2005). Available at US House Armed Services Committee website, http://www.house.gov/hasc/.

13. Abizaid conversation.

14. Clausewitz, p. 117.

15. Chitra Ragavan, "Kings of Cold War Treachery: Robert Hanssen and Aldrich Ames," *U.S. News & World Report*, 27 January 2003.

16. Clausewitz, p. 127. Emphasis added.

17. US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, Joint Pub 3-13 (Washington: GPO, 1998), p. 18.

18. General Richard B. Myers, "Myers Letter to Commanders on Public Affairs and Information Operations," 27 September 2004, quoted by Mark Mazzetti, "US Use of Media in War Sparks Debate," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 December 2004: "Although both [public affairs] and [military information operations] conduct planning, message development, and media analysis, the efforts differ with respect to audience, scope and intent, and must remain separate."