



**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**ON STRATEGY: THE WAR ON TERROR IN CONTEXT**

by

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March 2006

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> March 2006	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> On Strategy: The War on Terror in Context			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Donald J. Reed			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> The War on Terror, as the outcome of the al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, promises to be the effort of a generation. If it is to win, the United States must approach it in a manner reminiscent of successes in past wars: with clearly defined and obtainable national objectives, and a unified national strategy to obtain those objectives. In addition, it must establish a clear long-term vision for transforming its efforts and its institutions from the industrial age to the information age as the new domain for waging war. This thesis examines the War on Terror from several perspectives. First, is the strategic context in which the war is being conducted, particularly the issues involved in its prosecution. Second, the Vietnam War and the War on Terror are examined in historical context to determine if the United States is repeating the strategic mistakes that led to its defeat in Vietnam. Third, transformation imperatives are identified which require the Nation to consider what it must do to win the War on Terror while simultaneously preparing for the emergence of greater forms of information age warfare. Finally, an adaptive capabilities-based approach is suggested for the United States to deal with the new strategic reality it faces.			
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> War, Terrorism, Strategy			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 137
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL

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**ON STRATEGY: THE WAR ON TERROR IN CONTEXT**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

The War on Terror, as the outcome of the al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, promises to be the effort of a generation. If it is to win, the United States must approach it in a manner reminiscent of successes in past wars: with clearly defined and obtainable national objectives, and a unified national strategy to obtain those objectives. In addition, it must establish a clear long-term vision for transforming its efforts and its institutions from the industrial age to the information age as the new domain for waging war.

This thesis examines the War on Terror from several perspectives. First, is the strategic context in which the war is being conducted, particularly the issues involved in its prosecution. Second, the Vietnam War and the War on Terror are examined in historical contexts to determine if the United States is repeating the strategic mistakes that led to its defeat in Vietnam. Third, transformation imperatives are identified; these require the Nation to consider what it must do to win the War on Terror while simultaneously preparing for the emergence of greater forms of information age warfare. Finally, an adaptive capabilities-based approach is suggested for the United States to deal with the new strategic reality it faces.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their support and inspiration to me in completing this thesis:

Dr. Christopher Bellavita, for allowing me intellectual freedom while challenging me with hard questions.

Mr. David Brannon, for giving me the inspiration to reach for higher levels of academic understanding and excellence.

LTG Joseph R. Inge, who inspired me with his strategic vision during the turbulent period following the events of 9/11.

LTG Russel L. Honoré, who inspired me with his strategic leadership during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

My son-in-law, SPC Adam Martin, for inspiring me with his service as a member of the 48<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team on the front lines of the War on Terror in Baghdad, Iraq.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I thank my wife, Victoria, for her great patience and understanding during this endeavor. Without her support, I would never have completed this work.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we had when we created them.”*

–Albert Einstein (attributed)<sup>1</sup>

### A. THESIS STATEMENT

This will be a critical analysis of United States strategy in the War on Terror using established principles of war, as applied to past wars in the industrial age, particularly the Vietnam War, and adapted to emerging concepts of warfare in the information age, to address the questions: Is the United States repeating the strategic mistakes in the War on Terror that caused it to lose the Vietnam War? What factors are shaping the nature of the environment and the nature of the engagement? What strategic factors will drive the United States to transform its efforts in the War on Terror to the information age? How can United States success in the War on Terror be measured? What must the United States do to look beyond the War on Terror and prepare for the new strategic paradigm that confronts it?

### B. PURPOSE

The results of this analysis are of primary importance to the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security if they are to avoid great expenditure of materiel and loss of life in a losing effort, as occurred in Vietnam, and which available evidence suggests is a possible outcome of the War on Terror. Such a result would have extreme strategic long-range negative implications for the United States by weakening its global posture and inviting future challenges from its adversaries. This analysis is also of considerable importance to the American public. As the events of 9/11 demonstrated, the United States can be attacked on its home territory by its potential adversaries in the War on Terror. A successful national strategy, as well as transformation of that strategy to emerging forms of warfare in the information age, is necessary if future attempts to attack the United States or its interests, at home or abroad, are to be defeated or prevented.

<sup>1</sup> *The Quotations Page*. [http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Albert\\_Einstein/31](http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Albert_Einstein/31) (accessed 02/09/06)

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis is a qualitative approach using a four-part methodology. First, a review is conducted of the problematic strategic issues that define current United States efforts in prosecuting the War on Terror. Second, a comparative case study of American experience in both the Vietnam War and the War on Terror is made, to place them in context and determine if the United States is repeating past strategic mistakes. Third, environmental factors are discussed, including both the historical evolution of modern war as well as emerging concepts of war, which will drive transformation of the United States effort in the War on Terror from its current adversary-focused industrial age approach to a capabilities-focused information age approach. Fourth, a conceptual approach for conducting the War on Terror in the information age is recommended. The research will be accomplished by reviewing both existing and emerging bodies of literature and evidence. From this analysis, it should be possible to develop a proposal for transforming the United States effort to achieve victory in the War on Terror while simultaneously preparing for the emergence of more advanced forms of future warfare that will follow it.

## II. WHY STRATEGY MATTERS

*“You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,” said the American colonel. The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. “That may be so,” he replied, “but it is also irrelevant.”*

–Conversation in Hanoi, April 1975<sup>2</sup>

*“We thank God for appeasing us with the dilemma in Iraq after Afghanistan. The Americans are facing a delicate situation for both countries. If they withdraw they will lose everything and if they stay, they will continue to bleed to death.”*

–Ayman Zawahiri, September 2003<sup>3</sup>

The two statements above, separated by 28 years of history, reflect a common element for the United States in both the Vietnam War and the War on Terror – the lack of a cohesive wartime national strategy. They also reflect the views of enemies that, unable to defeat the United States militarily, adopted long-term strategies of attrition to defeat the national will of the United States. The War on Terror, as the outcome of the al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, promises to be the effort of a generation. If it is to win the War on Terror and prepare itself for the era of warfare that follows, the United States must approach it in a manner reminiscent of successes in past wars: with clearly defined and obtainable national objectives, and a unified national strategy to obtain those objectives. In addition, it must establish a clear long-term vision for transforming its efforts and its institutions from the industrial age to the information age as the new paradigm for waging war. Parameters for the new paradigm can be found by studying the lessons from past United States wars, and by evaluating them against emerging concepts of warfare in the information age.

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<sup>2</sup> Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1984), 21. Conversation on 25 April 1975 in Hanoi between Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., then Chief, Negotiations Division, U.S. Delegation, Four Party Joint Military Team and Colonel Tu, Chief, North Vietnamese (DRV) Delegation, as reported by Colonel Summers.

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous (Michael Scheur), *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's, Inc., 2004), xxi. “Recorded Audio Message by Ayman Zawahiri,” Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television, 10 September 2003, as reported by Anonymous (Michael Scheur).

For example, when the strategic reasons for the United States loss in the Vietnam War are considered against its current efforts in the War on Terror, parallels can be found.<sup>4</sup> In Vietnam, the United States expended the majority of its strategic military effort against the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam, which it viewed as the main North Vietnamese effort. Although the United States military succeeded in destroying the Viet Cong insurgency, it did not prevent North Vietnam from attaining its strategic objective of defeating American public support for the war and forcing the United States to withdraw from South Vietnam in defeat, thereby leaving South Vietnam open to conquest by conventional forces. In actuality, destruction of North Vietnam's regular forces, which ultimately overran South Vietnam, should have been the main strategic military objective of the United States.

In the War on Terror, the United States is currently expending the majority of its strategic military efforts against insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, which can be viewed as fronts in the larger War on Terror.<sup>5</sup> However, the United States has not clearly defined its adversaries, or its overall strategic objectives in the War on Terror. Al Qaeda, however, has clearly stated its intent to bleed the United States economy as a means of defeating American public support for the war. The insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq are likely not the main effort against the United States, and it is not certain that in its military engagement against them the United States is winning the War on Terror. In a manner reminiscent of Vietnam, public opinion polls reflect that, while the American public continues to support the overall War on Terror, it is growing increasingly disenchanted with the War in Iraq. The first strategic objective of the United States should be the defeat of al Qaeda.

Additional factors, which define the character of the War on Terror, also have to be considered. First, the Vietnam War was an ideological struggle between a western industrialized world power and an Asian agrarian nation, fought using industrial age

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<sup>4</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, Authorized Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2004), 361-398. Chapter 12 of *The 9/11 Commission Report* lays out a blueprint for a United States global strategy in the War on Terror.

<sup>5</sup> *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, 2005, 1.  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq\\_national\\_strategy\\_20051130.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06)

methods and weapons. The War on Terror is a war along cultural lines between a western information age world power and information age non-state entities. It will be fought using information age methods and weapons which focus more on networking of organizations and processes than military strength. Information age technology, which has eliminated concepts of time and distance, virtually guarantees that the War on Terror will again be brought to United States soil, as it was on 9/11. Second, the ongoing reorganization of the United States government and its intelligence community will play an as-yet-to-be-determined role in the War on Terror. Finally, the implications of the War on Terror are global. The experience of the United States, and its outcomes, will have implications for the world community as a whole in the information age.

#### **A. THE NEW STRATEGIC REALITY**

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 introduced the United States to a new strategic reality, one which will confront the Nation for generations to come. No longer can the United States rely on the conventional protections of time and distance as a result of being surrounded by vast oceans and air space. Instead, non-conventional attacks may come with little to no notice, and they may occur against United States citizens and interests at home as well as abroad. In the War on Terror, an existential war of ideas, future attacks on the United States may originate from within as well as from outside the Nation's borders.

Nor can the Nation rely on the time between wars to reconstitute itself and focus on future threats. Instead, the new strategic reality, the context in which the Nation finds itself in the War on Terror, is similar to that in which the Army finds itself – that war is now the norm, the steady state environment, and not the exception.<sup>6</sup> It is a protracted and continuous war of finite conventional resources arrayed against infinite asymmetrical threats. The implications of this new strategic reality are clear: the Nation must come to understand the character of the threat it faces and adapt accordingly. Failure to do so

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<sup>6</sup> Department of the Army, *Posture Statement* (2005). <http://www.army.mil/aps/05/> (accessed 02/09/06) A statement on the posture of the U.S. Army 2005, by the Honorable Francis J. Harvey, Secretary of the Army, and General Peter J. Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff, presented to the First Session, 109th Congress, February 6, 2005.



greatest threat to the nation, to be discussed in Chapters III and IV, may not be military at all, but may come from non-military methods of waging war.

The national challenge for the nation in the War on Terror will be to transform its approach away from industrial age concepts that focus on conventional, symmetrical military threats and responses; are based on hierarchical command and control (C2); and which are geography-based across territory and space. Instead, it must adopt a network-centric multi-disciplinary approach based on the understanding that a fundamental shift of power has occurred from industry to information. The new paradigm must be rooted in information age concepts that focus on non-conventional, asymmetrical threats and responses, to include non-military methods of applying force to wage war, and non-hierarchical C2. It must expand beyond the geographical base of territory and space, to defeat the threats to which the United States is most vulnerable.

Perhaps the most significant aspects of the new strategic reality are its persistent nature, resulting in a blurring of the familiar distinctions between war and peace, potential for elimination of the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, and erasure of the foreign-domestic divide. These are the by-products of the information age paradigm for waging war. The Department of Defense *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (2006)* acknowledges the nature of the new strategic reality in its opening statement, “The United States is a nation engaged in what will be a long war.”<sup>8</sup> Military leaders and government officials have taken to calling the War on Terror the “long war,” which is “recognition that there is no end in sight.”<sup>9</sup>

In the War on Terror, there can be no time for a strategic pause to reset or to plan for the future. Instead, the time horizon to address the strategic gaps in preparedness and performance is now, while engaged. Traditionally, the strategic military planning time horizon has been measured in months, years, and even decades. The strategic time horizon in the War on Terror is measured in the seconds, minutes, and hours in which asymmetrical attacks can occur. These timelines are incompatible and must be reconciled.

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<sup>8</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (2006)*, v. <http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report.pdf> (accessed 02/09/06)

<sup>9</sup> Josh White and Ann Scott Tyson, “Rumsfeld Offers Strategies for Current War,” *Washington Post* (February 3, 2006).

Yet, more than three years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many issues concerning the War on Terror, and United States strategy in conducting it, while simultaneously preparing for the type of warfare that will follow it, remain in transition and continue to lack clarity and resolution. Two schools of thought offer themselves for consideration: Whether the United States can win the War on Terror by continuing to refine its existing conventional symmetrical military strategies and methods of the industrial age, or whether it must adopt new asymmetrical strategies and methods appropriate to the information age.

The issues that shape these two schools of thought can be observed within several lines of inquiry including: issues of definition to achieve a focused national effort, issues of doctrine as a tool for shaping the national effort, issues of policy to guide the national effort, issues of strategy to accomplish the national effort, and issues of transforming the national effort from the industrial age to the information age.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationships of these lines of inquiry to one another. Issues of definition constitute the domain in which all the other lines of inquiry reside. The domains of doctrine and of transformation overlay themselves across the domains of policy and strategy, shaping the direction of each. Within the domains of policy and strategy resides the national will and future United States success or failure in the War on Terror. Peters alludes indirectly to the question of American national will in *New Glory: Expanding America's Global Supremacy* when he says, "We have the cultural, economic, and military power to do what is necessary in these tumultuous times. But we lack the vision."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ralph Peters, *New Glory: Expanding America's Global Supremacy* (New York, NY: Sentinel, Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 2005), 10.

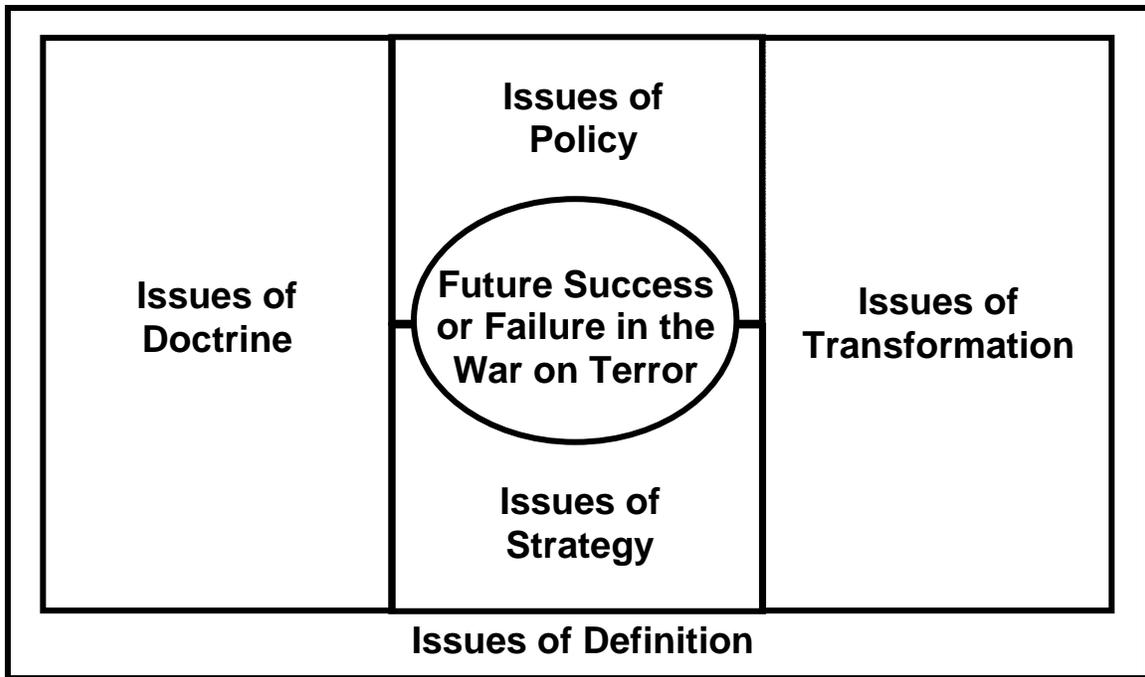


Figure 2. Issues in the War on Terror.

## B. ISSUES OF DEFINITION

Lack of definition in the War on Terror is problematic. While it allows national leaders the flexibility to define and redefine success in ways that suit political purposes, it also has potential drawbacks. From an operational perspective, it potentially leads to lack of clarity and understanding, and thus lack of focused national effort along with its attendant risk of failure. The very phrase “War on Terror” lacks definition, and therefore presents the United States with a strategic issue that inhibits its efforts to prosecute the war effectively. As multiple sources have indicated, “terror” is not the enemy. In the War on Terror, neither terror nor terrorism can be defeated since terror is a method and terrorism is a tactic. From this perspective, neither terror nor terrorism takes on the characteristics of entities that can be subjected to defeat in the traditional sense.

In February 2003, the White House released the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* in which it defined America’s enemy as “terrorism” in general.<sup>11</sup> The 9/11

<sup>11</sup> *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1.  
[http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter\\_terrorism/counter\\_terrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/counter_terrorism/counter_terrorism_strategy.pdf).  
 (accessed 02/09/06).

Commission, recognizing the difficulty that the White House definition poses, further narrowed the definition when it declared that “the enemy is not just ‘terrorism,’ some generic evil,” but must be the “threat posed by *Islamist* terrorism – especially the al Qaeda network, its affiliates, and its ideology.”<sup>12</sup> However, even this clarification by the 9/11 Commission does not resolve the issue. As Burke further notes, definitions are important. In *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*, he points out that current definitions are subjective and, since terrorism is a tactic, the adoption by the United States of the phrase “War on Terrorism” is nonsensical.<sup>13</sup> From an operational perspective, it does not allow a precise description of the problem confronting the Nation. Tilford goes even further in *The War on Terror: World War IV* and establishes a link between definitions and strategy when he declares that in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, when the Bush Administration labeled its efforts the War on Terror, it made a basic and fundamental strategic error.<sup>14</sup> From Tilford’s perspective, the error is so grave that it places the United States in the position of fighting a war that it could lose because it has misjudged the nature of its opponent.

It is of note that the *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* defines the enemy as “a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals – and their state and non-state supporters – which have in common that they exploit Islam and use terrorism for ideological ends.”<sup>15</sup> This definition, limited to the Department of Defense, further restricts the definition of the enemy by assigning it a connection to Islam. It does not address information age entities not connected to Islam.

Lack of definition further complicates United States efforts in coming to grips with the entity known as “al Qaeda.” If al Qaeda represents the primary, or at least the most visible, opponent of the United States in the War on Terror its precise nature remains unclear. From various sources, it can be ascertained that al Qaeda is, variously,

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<sup>12</sup> 9/11 Commission Report, 362.

<sup>13</sup> Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd, 2004), 22.

<sup>14</sup> Earl Tilford, “The War on Terror: World War IV,” A Reserve Officers Association National Security Report, *Officer* (October 2004), 38.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Defense, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (2006), 4. <http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/docs/2005-01-25-Strategic-Plan.pdf> (accessed 02/09/06).

either a terrorist group,<sup>16</sup> a stateless network of terrorists that represents a radical movement in the Islamic world,<sup>17</sup> a venture capitalist firm that sponsors a terror network of networks,<sup>18</sup> or not a terrorist group at all but a worldwide insurgency.<sup>19</sup> Understanding the differences among the definitions of al Qaeda is critical if the United States is to develop a clear strategy for victory in the War on Terror. Each of the various definitions invokes a different strategy for its defeat and failure on the part of the United States to employ the correct strategic approach invites failure overall. Ultimately, in order to defeat al Qaeda as a precursor to winning the War on Terror, it may be necessary to accept several conditions: That al Qaeda is a non-state entity that possesses elements of each of the definitions above; that it is constantly evolving its methods, tactics, and philosophy, i.e., the very essence of what it is; that it is very successful in attracting adherents; and that it may represent the forerunner of both terrorism and future warfare in the information age.

The definition of victory in the War on Terror is also problematic. The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* acknowledges this when it states, “Victory against terrorism will not occur as a single, defining moment.” Instead, it will consist of an open-ended and “sustained effort to compress the scope and capability of terrorist organizations, isolate them regionally, and destroy them within state borders...”<sup>20</sup> The problem with this definition is that it offers no end state, no reasonable expectation that the War on Terror can be brought to conclusion. As a matter of practicality, it may not be possible to eliminate terrorist groups entirely. The strategic alternatives of rollback, containment, or elimination of terrorist threats are discussed more fully in Chapters IV and V.

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<sup>16</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Handbook No.1, *A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (2005). Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 362-363.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “The Leadership Secrets of Osama Bin Laden: The Terrorist as CEO,” *Atlantic Monthly* (April 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous (Michael Scheur), *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terrorism*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 12.

A final definition, which poses difficulty for the United States in the War on Terror, is the legal status of its adversaries. Are those individuals who carry out terrorist acts against the United States and its interests criminals or are they armed combatants? The difference is critical in bridging the foreign-domestic divide defined by the 9/11 Commission and crafting a wartime strategy.<sup>21</sup> A primary example is the legal status of the al Qaeda detainees held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The 9/11 Commission recommended that the United States should develop a coalition approach for the detention and humane treatment of captured international terrorists, possibly structured on Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions on the law of armed conflict. This is at least tacit acknowledgment that the detainees are recognized as armed combatants and should be accorded some of the protections of the Geneva Conventions.<sup>22</sup> However, in a decision that was issued nearly simultaneously with the release of *The 9/11 Commission Report*, the United States Supreme Court ruled that detainees at Guantanamo Bay can take their cases that they are unlawfully imprisoned to the American court system.<sup>23</sup> The impact of the Supreme Court's ruling is that it calls into question whether the United States is legally at war in the War on Terror, or whether it is actually pursuing a law enforcement action. By offering protections of the United States legal system to the detainees, it appears that the Supreme Court does not recognize the War on Terror as a war according to legal and historical definitions.

As indicated above, many of the issues that currently affect the War on Terror can be traced to lack of definition, lack of clarity, and diffused rather than focused effort. This has the benefit of allowing policy makers to maintain flexibility in defining and re-defining success in many ways. However, it poses great difficulty in developing

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<sup>21</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 399.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 379-380.

<sup>23</sup> *Rasul et al v. Bush, President of the United States et al.*, 542 U.S. 03-334 and 03-343 (2004). The overall ruling of the Supreme Court was that United States courts have jurisdiction to consider challenges to the legality of the detention of foreign nationals captured abroad in connection with hostilities and incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay. As the Supreme Court pointed out, the Guantanamo Bay detainees: are not nationals of countries at war with the United States; deny they have engaged in or plotted acts of aggression against the United States; have never been afforded access to any tribunal therefore have never been tried and convicted of wrongdoing; for more than two years have been imprisoned in territory over which the United States exercises exclusive jurisdiction and control

effective strategy and conducting precision operations. Lack of definition also affects, for good or bad, the application of doctrine, policy, and transformation concepts to the War on Terror.

### C. ISSUES OF DOCTRINE

By invoking the language, in other words the logic, of war in declaring the War on Terror the United States committed itself to its rules of grammar. Tilford explains Clausewitz's concept of grammar in the following way,

The logic of war, violence directed by political intent, remains constant but the grammar changes. Logic is a constant regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, nationality or cultural factors. On the other hand, how one addresses a particular problem or issue, the methods used, is subject to a large number of factors such as age, sex, physical condition, resources, culture, religious beliefs and values. Applied to war, there is then a distinctly American way of war that differs significantly from the way Chinese or Russians or Zulus make war. There is also a distinctly Muslim fundamentalist way of making war. Clausewitz's point is that although nations and groups make war in different ways based on a large number of factors [grammar], they go to war for one logical reason only: to force an enemy to do their will.<sup>24</sup>

Tilford's reference to Clausewitz opens the door to modern war fighting concepts. Current United States contemporary conventional military doctrine for fighting wars derives its foundation – its rules of grammar – from the writings of nineteenth-century Prussian General Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz, particularly his seminal thesis, *On War*.<sup>25</sup> Despite being published posthumously after Clausewitz's death in 1831, *On War* continues to shape current American military thinking. While this may seem incongruous, this 173-year old source remains the most modern authority available on the essence of war. Unlike other disciplines in which bodies of literature have evolved, "Clausewitz's work stands out among those very few older books which have presented profound and original insights that have *not* been adequately absorbed in later literature."<sup>26</sup> Simply put, no one has produced a better description of the essence of war and the immutable principles for its conduct in nearly two centuries. It is considered by

<sup>24</sup> Tilford, "The War on Terror: World War IV," 37.

<sup>25</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 605.

<sup>26</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, Introductory essay by Bernard Brodie, 50.

many to be the greatest work on war and strategy ever produced by Western civilization, and its key concepts can be used to put the War on Terror in perspective.

The first concept that Clausewitz offers is his definition of war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>27</sup> The War on Terror is not unique, and it would be a mistake to see it in any way other than strategic context. To begin, Clausewitz’s definition of war can be broken into three elements. They are, first, that the effort is directed toward an identified opponent; second, that it involves violence or use of force to compel our opponent to fulfill our will; and third, that we know our national will. In his chapter on war as an instrument of policy, Clausewitz also wrote that “war’s grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic.”<sup>28</sup> The War on Terror does not present a new problem from Clausewitz’s logical perspective, but merely a modern application of an ancient concept.

Second, Clausewitz declared that all wars could be considered acts of policy. Otherwise, the entire effort contradicts the history of war. It is absolutely essential therefore that,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>29</sup>

To understand the true nature of the War on Terror will require not only a strict definition of the enemy, but also a knowledge and comprehension of the nature of the war itself. For the United States to stray from this principle, again, invites failure.

This leads to a third principle established by Clausewitz, that of the political objective. To paraphrase, the political object is the goal, war is the means for reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.<sup>30</sup> Only upon establishment of the objective of the war can strategy be devised to achieve it. Following

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<sup>27</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*. 75.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 605.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81.

the logic of Clausewitz if al Qaeda is its most visible enemy in the War on Terror, then the United States must understand the nature of al Qaeda, and the nature of its conflict with al Qaeda. It can then develop a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective with attendant strategy for the defeat of al Qaeda. Lack of clarity of strategic objectives, in the long-term, has the potential to lead to a wearing down of American resolve, which ultimately can lead to defeat. This is reminiscent of the lack of clarity of strategic objectives, described very clearly and eloquently by Summers, which contributed to American defeat in Vietnam.<sup>31</sup>

Clausewitz put forth two additional sets of concepts that offer insight into the War on Terror. They are the concepts of fog and friction, and the concepts of efforts that constitute preparations for war versus war proper. The concept of fog in war refers to the uncertainty of the information that is available to the commander.<sup>32</sup> Uncertainty can make problems seem, outside of perspective, larger than they really are. In the absence of information, that which is not known is left to chance. Friction is the concept that “everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult,” and the difficulties accumulate.<sup>33</sup> Clausewitz envisioned an army as a very simple machine, but with a multitude of moving parts, each of which retains its independent capability to generate friction.

Both fog and friction can be observed throughout the United States effort in the War on Terror. The effects of fog can be found in the lack of clarity of information that exists at the policy, strategic, operational, and tactical levels of effort. Friction can be observed in the homeland security related interagency conflicts between international, federal, state, local, tribal, and private agencies. Both fog and friction have impacted the strategic gaps that exist between agencies such as that between the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense; in the foreign-domestic divide described by the 9/11 Commission; in the lack of interoperability between agencies at all levels nationwide; and in the failure to share intelligence across agency boundaries.

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<sup>31</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 46.

<sup>32</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

Examples of fog and friction abound in the War on Terror, and were very well summarized by Rumsfeld when he said that the United States must be prepared “to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain and what we have to understand will be the unexpected.”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Clausewitz said that, “The activities of war may be split into two main categories: those *that are merely preparation for war*, and [those that constitute] *war proper*.” Preparations for war produce “the end product,” trained and equipped fighting forces. War proper “on the other hand, is concerned with the use of these means, once they have been developed, for the purposes of [waging] the war.”<sup>35</sup> The purpose of war is presumed to be the defeat of one’s enemy. Similarly, the application of effort to the War on Terror should be divided into those activities that are preparations for war and those that are conduct of the war proper. Both activities are necessary, but each should be considered separately and not confused one for the other when evaluating success. Nor can they be separated from objective and strategy.

The outcome of the Vietnam War is an example of the result that can occur when preparations for war and war proper are confused with objective and strategy. In referring to the United States defeat in Vietnam, Summers asks the question, “How could we have succeeded so well [tactically and logistically], yet failed so miserably [strategically]?”<sup>36</sup> He opens his analysis of the Vietnam War with this declaration:

At the height of the war, the Army was able to move almost a million soldiers a year in and out of Vietnam, feed them, clothe them, house them, supply them with arms and ammunition, and generally sustain them better than any Army had ever been sustained in the field. To project an Army of that size halfway around the world was a logistics and management task of enormous magnitude, and we had been more than equal to the task. On the battlefield itself, the Army was unbeatable. In engagement after

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<sup>34</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, remarks presented on “21<sup>st</sup> Century Transformation of the U.S. Armed Forces” at the National Defense University, Washington, D.C., January 31, 2002, 4. [http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library\\_files/speech\\_136\\_rumsfeld\\_speech\\_31\\_jan\\_2002.pdf](http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/speech_136_rumsfeld_speech_31_jan_2002.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>35</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 131-132.

<sup>36</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 22.

engagement, the forces of the Viet Cong and of the North Vietnamese Army were thrown back, with terrible losses. Yet, in the end, it was North Vietnam, not the United States that emerged victorious.<sup>37</sup>

The Army's accomplishments in Vietnam could not have been accomplished without the application of preparations for war on a large scale. In essence, the Army did everything it was designed to do in Vietnam, but it failed to achieve United States victory. The failure can be viewed in two ways. First, the activities that constituted preparations for war, e.g., logistics, personnel, and resource management were not always distinguished from war proper, resulting in misdirection of priorities. The result was a systems analysis approach to the Vietnam War that overrode strategic planning. Second, both preparations for war and war proper were directed toward an objective and strategy that were flawed. Regardless of the success of the overall effort, its support of a flawed strategy doomed it to ultimate failure.

How does the United States avoid making a similar mistake in the War on Terror? Much of the current homeland security effort in the War on Terror – reorganization of government, critical infrastructure protection, and scenario-based planning are examples – are defensive actions that take on the guise of preparations for war. They do not directly, in and of themselves, defeat al Qaeda or any other adversary. It is not certain that they are even effective deterrents. Those offensive diplomatic, information, military, law enforcement, and economic actions that are taken to apply force directly to terrorist adversaries to defeat them and force them to accept the will of the United States are examples of war proper. In the final analysis, it will be necessary for the United States to ensure that its efforts, both those that constitute preparation for war, as well as those that constitute war proper, are directed toward clearly defined, decisive and attainable objectives and strategy for victory.

#### **D. ISSUES OF POLICY**

First and foremost, the policy question must be asked: Is the United States truly at war in the War on Terror? The determinations of the *9/11 Commission Report* indicate

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<sup>37</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 21-22.

that the United States is in popular deed, if not in legal fact, a Nation at war, and lead to its recommendations for establishing national objectives and a national strategy for conducting the War on Terror.<sup>38</sup> The findings of the 9/11 Commission meet two of the three critical elements in Clausewitz's military-political definition of war. First, that the effort is directed toward an identified opponent; and second, that it involves violence or use of force to compel our opponent to fulfill our will. According to the 9/11 Commission the United States opponent in the War on Terror consists of the terrorist groups and their allies, particularly the global al Qaeda network, that form the threat of Islamist terrorism, thereby satisfying the first element of war: an effort directed toward an identified opponent.<sup>39</sup> Although there are problems with this definition, particularly that it falls short of defining the full scope of the threat to the United States, it represents a start toward development of a national objective and strategy. The use of American and allied forces to find and destroy terrorist groups, most notably in Afghanistan and Iraq, partially satisfies the second element of war: the use of violence or force to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.<sup>40</sup> The issue to be resolved is whether the insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Iraq are the right enemy, at the right time, and in the right place.

The third element in Clausewitz's military-political definition of war, that we know our national will, is partially, but not completely, satisfied by Public Laws 107-40 and 107-243. These laws, from a legal perspective, are not a formal declaration of war. However, they give the president broad powers to prosecute the effort that has come to be known popularly as the War on Terror. Under the provisions of Public Law 107-40, the president is authorized to use force against those nations, organizations, or persons who planned and carried out the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, and those that harbored them, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States.<sup>41</sup> Public Law 107-243 authorizes the president to use the armed forces of the United States to defend the United States against the threat posed by

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<sup>38</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 363.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Congressional Record* 147 (2001), September 14. Public Law 107-40, 115 STAT. 224, Authorization For Use of Military Force.

Iraq, and to enforce United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.<sup>42</sup> In such manner a portion of the national will, the political will, of the United States is presumed to be established, even without a formal declaration of war.

This poses a number of policy problems in the War on Terror. The rules for invoking the national will are embedded in Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, which gives to Congress – the elected representatives of the American people – the power to declare war. A declaration of war – to establish the national will – therefore becomes a shared responsibility between the political will of the government and the popular will of its constituents. This is more than just a formality. Failure by Congress to declare war in Vietnam led to a failure to mobilize the popular will of the United States public and ultimately contributed to the Nation’s defeat. A declaration of war gives the President clear-cut military authority, as well as non-military options, including internment of armed combatants and seizure of foreign funds and assets. A formal declaration of war in the War on Terror may have precluded the Supreme Court’s decision to grant detainees at Guantanamo Bay access to the protections of the United States judicial system. Further, according to Buckley,

To declare war is not necessarily to dispatch troops, let alone atom bombs. It is to recognize a juridically altered relationship and to license such action as is deemed appropriate. It is a wonderful demystifier... [leaving] your objective in very plain view.<sup>43</sup>

An acknowledgement of the need for the United States to establish objectives in the War on Terror, and to develop strategy to achieve those objectives, is found in the 9/11 Commission’s recommendation that the United States should, “consider *what to do* – the shape and objects of a strategy,” and “*how to do it* – organization of [the] government in a different way.”<sup>44</sup> Its recommended objectives are to attack terrorists and their organizations, prevent the continued growth of Islamist terrorism, and protect against and prepare for terrorist attacks. The 9/11 Commission says the strategy must

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<sup>42</sup> *Congressional Record* 148 (2002), October 10. Public Law 107-243, 116 STAT. 1498, Authorization For Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 58; William F. Buckley, “George Kennan’s Bomb,” *National Review* (April 1980). As quoted by Colonel Summers.

<sup>44</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 361.

incorporate offensive actions, with coalition partners, to counter terrorism; defensive actions with responsibilities for the Nation's defense clearly defined; a preventive strategy that is both political as well as military; and finally, a responsive strategy that deals with attacks that are not prevented. Finally, the 9/11 Commission recognized that if a national strategy is to be successful in the long-term, it must use all the elements of national power: intelligence, covert action, diplomacy, economic policy, foreign aid, and homeland defense.<sup>45</sup> From its recommendations it appears that the 9/11 Commission is suggesting a single overarching strategy for the United States in the War on Terror.

In actuality, the complexity of the undertaking has resulted in a proliferation of national strategies, of which there are no fewer than 20 covering multiple aspects of the War on Terror, and which deal with the problems of homeland security, homeland defense, and the War on Terror in piecemeal fashion, resulting in an approach that thus far is fragmented in its organization and disjointed in its application. A reading of the various national strategies, as well as the emerging body of literature, does not render a clear understanding of United States policy, objectives, or strategy overall. History dictates that failure of strategy has the potential to lead to overall failure in the War on Terror. Key questions to be considered in trying to understand United States strategy in the War on Terror include: Is the United States truly at war in the legal and traditional sense? If so, what are United States objectives in the War on Terror? What is the United States strategy for prosecuting the War on Terror in order to achieve its objectives? Has the United States taken the strategic offensive or the strategic defensive? What and where are the seams and gaps in United States strategy? Finally, what must the United States do to transform its strategy from the industrial age to the information age?

#### **E. ISSUES OF STRATEGY**

Issues of strategy can be found in the growing body of literature concerning the War on Terror. They often consist of anecdotal analyses that either affirm the success of ongoing United States military operations in Afghanistan or Iraq, or criticize the overall

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<sup>45</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 363.

effort as being misguided. They can be applied to some of the various national strategies, a few of which are discussed below, in order to gain a clearer understanding of United States efforts in the War on Terror.

The *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* was published prior to the creation of the 9/11 Commission.<sup>46</sup> However, it broadly parallels the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission of what the United States should do – employ all the elements of national power; and how it should do it – transform the major institutions of American national security to meet the requirements of the post-9/11 era. It reserves to the United States the option of preemptive actions to disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations of global reach. In this sense, it forms a loose overarching strategy to secure the United States against terrorist attack. It would be stronger if it addressed the numerous other national security strategies and outlined a method for pulling them together in a holistic effort. A critical shortfall is that it defines America’s enemy as terrorism in general, but does not identify a single political regime, person, ideology, or religion. In so doing it comes into conflict with both Clausewitz’s doctrine of war, as well as the 9/11 Commission’s specific recommended strategic objective of preventing the continued growth of Islamist terrorism. It makes the fundamental strategic error espoused by Tilford, in that it does not clearly identify the enemy, nor United States national objectives regarding that enemy.<sup>47</sup>

In its language the *National Security Strategy of the United States* may be contributing inadvertently to the motivations of al Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, in the War on Terror. In its preface, the president clearly states the policy of the United States to “actively work to bring the hope of democracy” to “every corner of the world.” In *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*, Anonymous (Michael Scheur) argues that it is precisely American policies and actions of the past 30 years in Muslim nations, including pressure to conform to democratic principles, that have lead to the War on Terror. American policies and actions “provide Muslims with

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<sup>46</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf> (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>47</sup> Tilford, “War on Terror,” 38.

proof of what bin Laden describes as ‘an ocean of oppression, injustice, slaughter, and plunder carried out by you against our Islamic ummah. It is therefore commanded by our religion that we must fight back. We are defending ourselves against the United States. This is a ‘defensive jihad’ as we want to protect our land and people.’”<sup>48</sup> Anonymous supports this argument with public opinion polls in the Muslim world, which indicate an overwhelming negative view of the United States.<sup>49</sup> Whether democracy is a clear and obtainable objective in the War on Terror is questionable. In *Beyond Terror: Strategy in a Changing World*, Ralph Peters takes the position that “Democracy must be earned and learned. It cannot be decreed from without. In a grim paradox, our [United States] insistence on instant democracy in shattered states...is our greatest contribution to global instability.”<sup>50</sup> Efforts to push democracy on other sovereign nations may be perceived by those nations and their cultures as the ultimate example of American hubris. It is this example that may lead them to respond to calls of war against the United States.

The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* also predates *The 9/11 Commission Report*.<sup>51</sup> Its stated purpose, “to mobilize and organize the Nation to secure the homeland from terrorist attacks,” seems to be a goal that would be more applicable to the *National Security Strategy of the United States*.<sup>52</sup> Its objectives – of preventing terrorist attacks within the United States, reducing America’s vulnerability to terrorism, and response and recovery to terrorist attacks – are focused inward toward domestic preparations and constitute a primarily defensive and preventive strategy. It is an example of what Summers described as taking the strategic defensive, which led to United States defeat in Vietnam.<sup>53</sup> Much of what it prescribes for homeland security also conforms to Clausewitz’s definition of *preparations for war* instead of the conduct of *war proper*. It does not provide an objective or a strategy for offensive actions to counter

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<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris*, 129.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>50</sup> Ralph Peters, *Beyond Terror: Strategy in a Changing World* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002), 179-181.

<sup>51</sup> *National Strategy for Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, Ch. 8.

terrorism, to preempt it by attacking and defeating terrorist organizations away from United States borders, or for taking the strategic offensive in the War on Terror. In its current form it provides a good blueprint for the Department of Homeland Security but, despite having a segment devoted to American Federalism and Homeland Security, it does not provide any authority for directing how the various federal agencies are to work in synchronization with one another to prosecute the War on Terror. Ultimately, in its call for implementation of homeland security measures, costing hundreds of billions of dollars to implement, it may play to al Qaeda's strategic objective of bleeding the United States economy to defeat American resolve.<sup>54</sup>

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* makes the same strategic error as the *National Security Strategy of the United States* by describing America's enemy as terrorism in general.<sup>55</sup> It recovers from this initial misstep by laying out a well defined objective, which it refers to as strategic intent, in the War on Terror, and establishing a very clear strategy to achieve that objective. Its stated objective, to stop terrorist attacks against the United States, and its citizens and interests worldwide and, ultimately, to create an international environment inhospitable to terrorists reflects a global perspective that is in line with the stated objectives of the 9/11 Commission. Its "4D" strategy: to defeat terrorist organizations of global reach; deny terrorist sponsorship and sanctuary; diminish underlying conditions for terrorism; and defend the United States, its citizens, and interests at home and abroad, is also in line with the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that a successful national strategy must use all the elements of national power.<sup>56</sup> Whereas the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* is primarily an inward focused defensive strategy, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* advocates an outward focused strategic offensive to defeat terrorist threats before they reach United States borders. It does not, however, link its provisions to those of the other competing national strategies.

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<sup>54</sup> Anonymous *Imperial Hubris*, 100-101.

<sup>55</sup> *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

The *National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* supports the *National Security Strategy of the United States* by clarifying the role of the Department of Defense in defending the nation.<sup>57</sup> It departs from the other national strategies examined in that it addresses all threats to the United States and its interests, including terrorist organizations, as well as rogue states and regional powers. It is global in nature with both an offensive and defensive strategic focus of conducting defense in depth of the United States, preventing conflict and surprise attack, and prevailing against adversaries. One facet that sets it apart from the other national strategies is its focus on transforming the Department of Defense to meet the threats to national security of the information age. In this respect it most clearly looks ahead to anticipate the nature of the transforming threats to the United States and anticipates what must be accomplished to defeat them. Its shortfalls are that it addresses only the actions of the Department of Defense in homeland defense, and it does not address linkage to the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, or the other elements of national power. It also reinforces the policy of the United States, spelled out in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, to support the spread of democracy to other nations, and thus may be a causal factor of the War on Terror.

In a manner similar to the arguments of Scheur and Peters above, Huntington, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, illustrates how the effort to spread democracy to societies that do not desire it can backfire.<sup>58</sup> He describes the use of phrases such as “the world community” or “the free world” as euphemisms that are used to give global legitimacy to actions that reflect the interests of the United States and other Western powers. In Huntington’s view the West essentially uses international institutions, military power, and economic resources to maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests, and promote Western political and economic values. He further refers to Western efforts to impose liberal Western values on non-Western societies as “human rights imperialism.” These efforts produce instead a backlash in the form of reaffirmation of indigenous values, as demonstrated in the form of increased support of religious

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<sup>57</sup> *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Department of Defense, 2005). <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Mar2005/d20050318nds1.pdf> (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>58</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Globalization and the Challenges of a New Century* (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2000), 15-16.

fundamentalism by the younger generations in non-Western cultures. Modern democratic government originated in the West and when it has appeared in non-Western societies it has usually been the product of Western colonialism or imposition. In non-Western societies, these actions by Western powers call into question democracy's legitimacy and put them – non-Western societies – into conflict with the West. Huntington's argument is made more powerful today because, while elements of it are visible in the post-9/11 era, it significantly pre-dates the events of 9/11 and the War on Terror by a decade.

This limited review of these key national strategies demonstrates the difficulty in relating United States strategy to its objectives in the War on Terror. While its objectives are difficult to determine, its profusion of national strategies, published by various federal agencies have created two issues: In some instances the strategies leave strategic seams and gaps in national security which remain vulnerable to exploitation, while in other instances they overlap resulting in unnecessary duplication of efforts and expenditure of resources. The end result is to render the nation's task of transforming its efforts from the industrial age to the information age all the more difficult.

## **F. ISSUES OF TRANSFORMATION**

Arquilla has declared the War on Terror, “the first great war between nations and networks.”<sup>59</sup> His remarks were further clarified on the fourth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 when he said, “If the Cold War was defined by an arms race in nuclear weapons, the war on terror has featured a race to build networks of warriors. It's a race we're losing.”<sup>60</sup> Following Arquilla's logic in the information age the conventional military-political nature of war as described by Clausewitz – the use of organized force for political ends – will come under question; and the means by which it is waged must both expand and transform to the characteristics of network-centric warfare. The United

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<sup>59</sup> John Arquilla, Professor of Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School. Student notes from a lecture given on networks and netwar at the Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, to graduate students in Cohorts 403 and 404, on July 12, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> John Arquilla, “On the Fourth Anniversary of 9/11, the War on Terror Isn't Going Well,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 11, 2005).

States must transform its institutions to take on the characteristics of networks if it is to acquire the capability to defeat its new adversaries in the social, information, cognitive, and physical domains of conflict that characterize the information age. The transformation may call into question many of the principles espoused by Clausewitz, particularly that warfare is conducted primarily between nation states, and that it is the exclusive province of armies or other military means.

A growing body of literature including such authors as Huntington, Kaplan, and van Creveld suggests that future war will move away from the principles of conventional trinitarian war established by Clausewitz, conducted between warring nation states and founded within each on the relationship between its government, its army and its people.<sup>61</sup> It will be replaced by modern, non-trinitarian war between state and non-state entities organized along social, economic, criminal, terrorist, armed gangs, special interest, and ethnic lines to name but a few. It will take on the characteristics of war without national boundaries, where the distinctions between public and private, government and people, military and civilian – i.e., combatants and noncombatants – will again become blurred as they were prior to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.<sup>62</sup>

War itself will be redefined in the information age, both in the means as well as the methods by which it is conducted. Hammes' description of the evolution of war in *The Sling and the Stone* lays the foundation for understanding Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW), which the United States faces in the War on Terror.<sup>63</sup> However, simply to defeat Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) will not be enough to win the War on Terror and to secure the Nation's interests. It will also be necessary for the United States to define and prepare for Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW), discussed in Chapter IV, which will follow the War on Terror.

As Cebrowski has noted national defense of the United States is no longer just about the Department of Defense, and homeland defense is no longer conducted solely at

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<sup>61</sup> Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations;" Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy, Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York, Vintage Books, 2000). Creveld, *Transformation of War*.

<sup>62</sup> Creveld, *Transformation of War*, 226.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas X. Hammes, Colonel, USMC, *The Sling and the Stone* (St. Paul, Minnesota, Zenith Press, 2004), 1.

long range.<sup>64</sup> The United States must transcend purely military doctrine for a fully integrated diplomatic, information, economic, military, and law enforcement approach to the War on Terror. Terrorist groups, both within and outside the United States, must be prevented from using information age technologies and methods to their advantage, and from acquiring the capabilities of global peer competitors.

The Cold War transformed the American national security structure, infusing it with a conservative mindset – to preserve national security – and over time the United States came to resemble its adversary as its adversary came to resemble the United States.<sup>65</sup> In the War on Terror the national effort must look outwards – moving beyond outdated concepts to embrace the information age – and in time the United States will come to resemble its new adversaries in the form of global networks consisting of both state and non-state entities. As the nature of war transforms to the information age a true transformation of national efforts becomes an imperative and not an option, consistent with the information age transformation that is also occurring globally as well as in American society. The imperative for transformation is summarized in the *Network Centric Operations Conceptual Framework* which states that, “The logic of the Cold War and the industrial age is giving way to a new logic, and hence, new rules and ways of doing things are needed. If the United States...does not define these rules, then we run the risk of having them define us.”<sup>66</sup> The United States must apply new ways of thinking, to include defining success, if it is to win the War on Terror, and prepare for the types of warfare that will follow it in the information age.

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<sup>64</sup> Arthur Cebrowski, “Transformation and the Changing Character of War,” Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Transformation Trends* (June 17, 2004), 2. [http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library\\_files/trends\\_370\\_Transformation%20Trends-17%20June%202004%20Issue.pdf](http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/trends_370_Transformation%20Trends-17%20June%202004%20Issue.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>65</sup> Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Washington, D.C. (September 2004), 34.

<sup>66</sup> John Gartska and David Alberts, “Network Centric Operations Conceptual Framework, Version 2.0” (Draft) (Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, June 2004), 7.

## **G. ON INSTITUTIONALIZING IMAGINATION**

In its report the 9/11 Commission concluded that the 9/11 terrorist attacks revealed four kinds of American failure, foremost among them a failure in imagination.<sup>67</sup> In this failure the Commission states that, “Imagination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies....It is therefore crucial to find a way of routinizing, even bureaucratizing the exercise of imagination.”<sup>68</sup> It follows this assertion with a chapter on global strategy and a concluding chapter with recommendations on reorganizing the federal government in order to achieve unity of effort in securing the Nation against future attacks.<sup>69</sup>

However, it is not enough to simply reorganize the government in order to correct each of the individual failures which led to the 9/11 attacks, either as a means to secure the Nation, or as a means to prepare the Nation to conduct the War on Terror in the information age. This approach would be bureaucratic in nature, but would fall short of achieving an institutionalizing of imagination. Instead, a more strategic approach is called for, one which is capable of achieving a holistic outcome. Writing nearly a year after the 9/11 attacks Arquilla provides a more accurate description of the nature of the problem confronting the United States:

In the last year, our defense posture has shifted. We used to be focused exclusively on nations; now we are also focused on networks. Networks like Al Qaeda are dangerous adversaries. They have loose, difficult-to-trace organizational structures. Vigorous efforts must be made to connect the dots of the network and its various dark allies. Yet, for all our new focus on winking out networked terror, we seem to have learned few lessons about the nature of “netwar”...

Our leadership and, indeed, most other leaders around the world are new to this type of warfare. Clearly, the most important step they all can take right now is to learn all they can about networks and network-style conflict. Raising their level

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<sup>67</sup> *9/11 Commission Report*, 339. The four kinds of failure identified by the 9/11 Commission are imagination, policy, capabilities, and management.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 12, “What To Do? A Global Strategy,” 361; Chapter 13, “How To Do It? A Different Way of Organizing the Government,” 399.

of awareness would open up the possibility of waging this war in new ways, rather than continuing to stumble along in a more traditional and ineffectual fashion.<sup>70</sup>

This thesis takes a similar approach. The issues of definition, doctrine, policy, strategy, and transformation discussed in this chapter are strategic in nature. The bureaucratic process of approaching them individually in isolation would not lend itself to gaining a true understanding of the War on Terror in context. Instead, a more strategic approach will be taken in succeeding chapters to establish a more imaginative and holistic view of the war and possible solutions to the new strategic reality confronting the Nation. Chapter III is a case study comparison of the Vietnam War and the War on Terror. Its purpose is to place the two wars in context, and to identify lessons from the United States defeat in Vietnam as a means to avoid future strategic errors in the War on Terror. Chapter IV proceeds from the premise that, while lessons from past wars are relevant, each war remains a special case and must also be considered against the historical backdrop of the era in which it is fought. Its focus is on the strategic weaknesses and gaps confronting the United States, and the fundamental changes in the national security environment that will drive the necessity for the Nation to transform its efforts in the War on Terror. Finally, Chapter V uses the lessons from Chapter III, and the changing strategic environment discussed in Chapter IV, to recommend a strategic way ahead. Its conclusion is that, while the United States fights the War on Terror, it must simultaneously prepare for the types of warfare that will follow it in the information age.

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<sup>70</sup> John Arquilla, "It Takes A Network," *Los Angeles Times* (August 25, 2002).

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### III. CASE STUDY – THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE WAR ON TERROR IN CONTEXT

“*[Mr. Bush] has got us into...the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.*”

–Arthur Schlesinger (2004)<sup>71</sup>

“*The peace we think we have is only another interregnum before another cycle of conflict.*”

–Robert D. Kaplan (2000)<sup>72</sup>

In little more than a half century the United States has been involved in two wars, in Korea and Vietnam, which it did not win. After three years of bloody fighting and more than 157,000 American casualties, including more than 54,000 American dead, in 1953 the Korean War ended in an inconclusive stalemate where it initially began, along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>73</sup> The casualties occurred in a conflict which the United States conducted in pursuit of limited political objectives.

In *This Kind of War*, Fehrenbach concluded that the lesson of Korea is that it happened – a war of limited political objectives to contain communism, conducted at great cost and with enormous loss of life, and which accomplished no more than to restore the political status quo on the Korean peninsula.<sup>74</sup> He further predicted that the United States would again be forced to fight wars of policy and limited political objectives before the end of the twentieth century.

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<sup>71</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, “This is Bush’s Vietnam – the wrong war, at the wrong time, in the wrong place,” *The Independent* (April 15, 2004). In his remarks, Mr. Schlesinger was referring broadly to the War on Terror but directed his comments specifically to what has been called the War in Iraq.

<sup>72</sup> Kaplan, *Coming Anarchy*, 182.

<sup>73</sup> T.R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1963), 655; *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Order Code RL32492, Library of Congress, July 13, 2005, 10; Classroom of the Future, Wheeling Jesuit University. <http://www.cotf.edu/ete/modules/korea/kwar.html> (accessed 02/09/06). Total casualties in Korea may have been as high as 4,000,000 combatants and noncombatants, including as many as 1,900,000 combined United States, United Nations, North Korean, South Korean, and Chinese dead combatants.

<sup>74</sup> Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 655-660.

Within ten years of the end of the Korean War the United States was again engaged in a war of limited political objectives, this time in Vietnam. After more than ten years of conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia and more than 211,000 American casualties, including more than 58,000 American dead, in 1973 the Vietnam War resulted in the first national defeat in history for the United States.<sup>75</sup>

In his post-war analysis of Vietnam Summers was left to ask his question, “How could we have succeeded so well [tactically and logistically], yet failed so miserably [strategically]?” Indeed, on balance it appears difficult to grasp how a Western industrialized superpower could be defeated by an underdeveloped agrarian nation with a fraction of its population and no gross national product to speak of, without accepting that the stronger nation’s overall objectives and strategy in the war were flawed. The lesson of Vietnam is that, when a war of policy and limited political objectives came again as Fehrenbach had predicted, on the battlefield the United States accomplished every military objective it set, but in the end North Vietnam, and not the United States, emerged victorious.

As a result of the great devastation and suffering inflicted upon both North and South Vietnam, and the United States failure to stop the spread of communism to South Vietnam, Karnow, in his opening chapter to *Vietnam: A History*, characterizes Vietnam as the “war nobody won.”<sup>76</sup> In Vietnam the United States failed in its application of the lesson of Korea.

After more than four years, and more than 23,000 American casualties, including more than 5,000 combatant and noncombatant dead, the United States remains involved in another war which it has approached as a war of limited objectives, the War on Terror, in which the outcome is still not certain and which may not be decided for a generation to

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<sup>75</sup> American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. 11. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War) (accessed 02/09/06) [http://www.rjsmith.com/kia\\_tbl.html](http://www.rjsmith.com/kia_tbl.html) (accessed 02/09/06); Total casualties in Vietnam are difficult to obtain. However, estimates range between 3,200,000 and 4,000,000 noncombatant dead in North and South Vietnam. Combatant deaths, in addition to United States casualties, may have included more than 5,000 United Nation deaths, 1,100,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, and 223,000 South Vietnamese.

<sup>76</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, Penguin Books, 1997 Edition), 2.

come.<sup>77</sup> Whether or not the United States will apply the lesson of Vietnam to the War on Terror remains to be seen. For the nation to repeat its failure in Vietnam by achieving all its tactical military objectives in the War on Terror, yet fail to achieve strategic victory, would have grave consequences for both the United States and the international community.

A common thread which unites all three wars in the cycle of conflict – Korea, Vietnam, and the War on Terror – is that, at some point, each has had the label “the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time” applied to it in some fashion.<sup>78</sup> The question of whether these wars were the wrong wars remains open to debate. It may be that they were necessary to their times and the United States could not turn away from them. It may be that it was necessary for the United States to fight both the Korean War and the Vietnam War against the larger backdrop of the Cold War. Similarly, it may be that it was necessary for the United States to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq against the larger backdrop of the War on Terror.

However, the question of whether each war achieved United States political objectives is more certain: In each case, the United States approached the war as a limited

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<sup>77</sup> *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 14-15; *Iraq: Summary of U.S. Casualties*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Order Code RS21578, Library of Congress, October 17, 2005, 1. <http://vikingphoenix.com/news/stn/2003/911casualties.htm> (accessed 02/09/06); Jim Krane, “Iraqi Civilian Deaths Exceed U.S. Toll,” *Philadelphia Enquirer*, October 26, 2005; The estimate of American casualties in the War on Terror includes military casualties from Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), and military and civilian casualty estimates from the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was compiled from broadcast news reports and the references above and includes: Afghanistan (194 killed, 510 wounded), Iraq (2,000 killed, 15,063 wounded), 9/11 attacks (3,030 killed, 2,337 wounded). These estimates will increase as the War in Iraq continues. Reliable estimates of opposition and non-American noncombatant casualties are not readily available. However, estimates of civilian noncombatant deaths in Iraq alone vary widely, ranging from 30,000 to 70,000 people.

<sup>78</sup> Variations of the phrase “wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time” have also been used in reference to both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. *Military Situation in the Far East*, hearings, 82d Congress, 1st session, part 2, 732 (1951); General Omar Bradley originated the phrase in testimony before the Senate Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Relations, May 15, 1951, when he said, “Frankly...this strategy would involve us in the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy.” Bradley was addressing General MacArthur’s recommendation to expand the war into China; Peter Kihss, “Kennedy Charges Nixon Risks War,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1960; Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy used the phrase in a Presidential campaign speech on October 12, 1960. Kennedy said, “Should I become President...I will not risk American lives...by permitting any other nation to drag us into the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time...” As President in 1962, Kennedy greatly expanded United States involvement in Vietnam.

war, without a formal declaration of war, and without public support - or with public support which eroded as the war progressed. In Korea, the United States successfully prevented the communist unification of North and South Korea, but it did not prevent the long stalemate that has existed on the Korean peninsula for more than fifty years and it did not deter later communist efforts in Vietnam. In Vietnam, the United States failed completely to prevent communist unification of North and South Vietnam. The War on Terror has strategic parallels to Vietnam and analysis of them yields points for comparison and study.

It becomes necessary to understand both the reasons for American defeat in Vietnam, as well as the direction of future wars, if the United States is to avoid continued great expenditure of materiel and loss of life in the War on Terror in a losing effort, as it did in Vietnam, and which available evidence suggests is still a possible outcome. Future success in the War on Terror will have its foundation in the attainment of historical perspective on the new strategic reality. Historical perspective will further enable resolution of the issues of definition, doctrine, policy, and strategy that currently exist in prosecuting any war in the information age. Ultimately, perspective and resolution of issues will create the conditions necessary to establish the direction for transformation of the war effort and ultimately define the parameters for success.

Even in victory, as Clausewitz noted, the result in war is never final.<sup>79</sup> Even a defeated opponent may view the outcome as only transitory and seek a different outcome at a later time under different circumstances. Understanding, to avoid the mistakes made in Vietnam, avoid potential loss in the War on Terror, and set the stage for future success in the information age, can be gained by an examination of the two wars against the principles of war related to the strategic environment, the nature of the engagement, and obstacles to the generation of force.

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<sup>79</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 80.

## A. THE STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

Following Clausewitzian logic, it becomes necessary first to define the nature of the war, not mistaking it for something else. Upon that foundation, it follows that the enemy can be defined, and that clear and obtainable objectives for winning the war can be established. The development of strategy follows the establishment of objectives. However, it is not clear that the true nature of the Vietnam War was established until after the war ended in defeat for the United States – nor has the nature of the ongoing War on Terror been clearly established.

For the United States, the Vietnam War was an ideological struggle between communism and democracy due to the backing of North Vietnam by China and the Soviet Union. The United States defined the Viet Cong guerrillas, an insurgency backed by North Vietnam, as the primary threat to South Vietnam. Its objective for winning the war was to destroy both the North Vietnamese Regular Army and the Viet Cong through a war of attrition. For North Vietnam, it was a war for reunification of North and South Vietnam after its partition by the Geneva Accords in 1954 and the subsequent failure to conduct promised free elections in 1956 to reunite the country. The United States followed the trinitarian logic of Clausewitz in prosecuting its strategy for winning the war. It deployed a professional combined arms military force – Army, Navy, and Air Force – to South Vietnam and used combined arms maneuver methods and tactics against the North Vietnamese Regular Army as well as the Viet Cong guerilla forces, which utilized primarily insurgent methods and tactics. Overall, the clash was between the United States symmetrical industrial age means of waging war and the asymmetrical industrial age means employed by North Vietnam. The United States focused on destroying North Vietnam's insurgent and military forces by conventional military means, while North Vietnam was focused on destroying the American national will to fight through a strategic communications campaign to influence both international and American domestic public opinion and capture the political initiative.<sup>80</sup>

Up to now, the United States main effort in the War on Terror has been very similar to that of the Vietnam War. It has sizable combined arms military forces

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<sup>80</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 156; Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 23-24.

deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, the most visible fronts in the War on Terror if not the most critical. Thus far, however, the United States has not adequately dealt with the apparent spread of al Qaeda as a global insurgency. While the United States has focused its primary military effort on the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, indications are that al Qaeda has spread its global insurgency to ninety or more other countries.<sup>81</sup> If accurate, this development would contradict any claims made by the United States on success in defeating al Qaeda in the War on Terror.

The United States has approached the War on Terror as an ideological struggle, although it appears that the insurgencies and their primary backer, al Qaeda, see it as a cultural conflict. Similar to the Vietnam War, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States is employing industrial age symmetrical means in a war of attrition against insurgent adversaries who are increasingly employing information age asymmetrical means. Outside the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters, it is clear that al Qaeda is conducting an information age asymmetrical insurgency.

In a manner very reminiscent of Vietnam, the United States is focused on destroying the insurgencies and al Qaeda, but al Qaeda is not focused on destroying United States conventional forces, which it cannot defeat militarily. Instead, al Qaeda has stated publicly its intent to bleed the American economy and thus destroy the American political and public will to fight. It can be argued that unchecked government spending for homeland security without measurable results plays to al Qaeda's objective. Thus far, the strategic communications campaign of al Qaeda has been overwhelmingly successful. By contrast, the United States strategic communications efforts have been largely ineffective or even nonexistent, and in one instance have resulted in unintended negative consequences. As part of its information operations campaign in Iraq, the United States Army has paid for positive stories to be placed in local Iraqi media. However, "globalization of media, driven by the Internet and the twenty-four-hour news cycle, makes it likely that information campaigns targeting foreign audiences find their

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<sup>81</sup> Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris*, 70.

way into U.S. media coverage.”<sup>82</sup> In addition to distorting the accuracy of domestic media reports on military operations in Iraq, this potentially violates laws prohibiting military propaganda efforts that target United States audiences. It is also reminiscent of Vietnam, when military information officers published optimistic accounts contrived to show progress, but which conflicted with the media dispatches of independent correspondents. The result was a “credibility gap that, over time, eroded the American public’s faith in official statements.”<sup>83</sup>

Two critical and conflicting analyses of United States failure in Vietnam have direct implications for the War on Terror. In his seminal analysis, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, Summers uses Clausewitzian theory to explain how the United States managed to achieve tactical success yet succumbed to strategic defeat in Vietnam.<sup>84</sup> Summers saw the Vietnam War as a struggle between two governments fighting one another in the classical trinitarian fashion, which symbolizes the modern era of warfare. According to Summers’ analysis, the true threat to South Vietnam was not the Viet Cong insurgency, but conventional invasion by North Vietnamese regular forces. His view is that both the United States and North Vietnam were fighting a conventional war. However, the United States erred in expending its main effort against the Viet Cong insurgency, while failing to destroy the North Vietnamese Regular Army, which ultimately overran South Vietnam and, over time, ultimately lost its political and public will to fight.

By contrast, in *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Hammes says that Summers misjudged the nature of the Vietnam War.<sup>85</sup> Hammes does not refute Clausewitzian doctrine but supports it in his assessment that, in Vietnam, the United States failed to correctly define either the nature of the war or the nature of its enemy and, therefore, its objectives and strategies were flawed. Hammes says that the conflict was not a conventional war between two nations following classical Clausewitzian concepts

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<sup>82</sup> Mark Mazzetti, “IRAQ: Planted Articles May Be Violation,” *Los Angeles Times* (January 27, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> Karnow, *Vietnam*, 18.

<sup>84</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, Ch. 1.

<sup>85</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, Ch. 6.

of conventional trinitarian warfare. Although the United States approached the Vietnam War from the perspective of conventional maneuver warfare to defend South Vietnam against a foreign invader, the North Vietnamese approached it quite differently. The North Vietnamese recognized that they did not have the resources to defeat the United States militarily in an effort to reunify their country. From the outset, against both the French and the Americans, the North Vietnamese employed the dialectic of insurgent warfare to destroy their opponents' political and public will to fight by prolonging the war, while simultaneously carrying out a successful political strategic communications campaign.

Following the logic of Hammes' argument, the similarities between the Vietnam War and the War on Terror become apparent, and it appears the United States could repeat the same strategic mistakes it made in Vietnam. The United States defeat in Vietnam emboldened its enemies and drew it into subsequent ill-fated conflicts by proxy in Afghanistan, Africa and Latin America.<sup>86</sup> A similar defeat in the War on Terror would have similar consequences for the United States but, in the information age, they would be potentially unlimited orders of magnitude greater.

## **B. THE ENVIRONMENT**

Since the American Revolution, the American public has maintained a unique symbiotic relationship with its military, embodied in the concept of "citizen soldiers" who are mobilized in time of war, and are representative of the public will. Political will and military objectives are inextricably linked in United States military doctrine. Military operations are conditional upon the national will, as reflected by both the political will of the Congress and the public will of the people. In the American system where there is no national will there can be no military campaign.

Summers and Hammes differ in their analyses of the manner and means by which the United States prosecuted the Vietnam War. However, they are in agreement on one key point. Both authors conclude that the United States was ultimately defeated in Vietnam because it lost its national will - its political and public will - to fight. A

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<sup>86</sup> Stephen J. Morris, "The War We Could Have Won," *New York Times* (May 4, 2005).

lessening of public support for the War on Terror is manifested in public opinion polls, very similar to polls that were taken during the Vietnam War, which show declining support for ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Table 1 illustrates the similarities and differences in the national will of the Nation during the Vietnam War and in the War on Terror. It has significant implications for United States capability to wage war in the post-modern era, when the traditional conventional parameters of war are less clearly defined.

### **1. Political Will**

In both the Vietnam War and the War on Terror, the political will of the nation is brought into question by the lack of any formal declaration of war, as shown in Table 1. Although the United States Constitution vests the authority to declare war in the Congress Presidents have frequently found ways to bypass it. By the middle of the twentieth century the Executive Branch of Government “had largely usurped the constitutional powers of the legislature in the realm of foreign affairs.”<sup>87</sup> This has included the commitment of military forces by the Executive Branch to extended campaigns without declarations of war, including in Korea, Vietnam, and the War on Terror.

As Buckley noted, to declare war “is to recognize a juridically altered relationship and to license such action as is deemed appropriate. It is a wonderful demystifier... [leaving] your objective in plain view.” Further, it mobilizes the Nation and it serves as a demonstration to its enemies, real and potential, of the force of its will and the gravity of its intent. It can influence and deter the decisions of enemies, and give pause to reflect by potential adversaries.

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<sup>87</sup> Karnow, *Vietnam*, 374.

<b>Principles of Strategy &amp; War</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>War on Terror</b>
<b>The Environment</b>		
National Political Will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal declaration of war</li> <li>• Gulf of Tonkin Resolution; based on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident which has since been criticized as likely inaccurate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal declaration of war</li> <li>• Public Law 107-40: Authorization For Use of Military Force</li> <li>• Public Law 107-243: Authorization For Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002</li> <li>• Use of debunked intelligence on WMD to justify invasion of Iraq</li> </ul>
The Congress		
National Public Will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision by President Johnson not to mobilize American public; strategic error</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing efforts by Bush Administration to mobilize public support; mixed results</li> </ul>
The People		

Table 1. The National Will.

With no formal declaration of war in either the Vietnam War or the War on Terror, justification for military actions was made through Congressional resolutions. In both cases, the grounds for the Congressional resolutions were subsequently deemed questionable, and thereby caused not only the government to lose credibility but called into question the entire war effort globally as well as domestically. In the case of Vietnam, the skirmish between American ships and North Vietnamese gunboats in the Tonkin Gulf was used by President Johnson to get Congress to pass the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. “It authorized the President ‘to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force,’ to defend South Vietnam and its neighbors and was used both by Johnson and President Richard M. Nixon to justify escalating the war...”<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, in the War on Terror the Executive Branch, without a formal declaration of war, used questionable intelligence on the presence of weapons of mass destruction, as justification to intervene in Iraq to enforce Public Law 107-243. The intelligence indicating that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction came from suspect sources that had not been verified, and has since been deemed not credible. The proof of its lack of credibility was confirmed by the failure of United States and Coalition forces to find any weapons of mass destruction following the invasion of Iraq.

<sup>88</sup> Scott Shane, “Doubts Cast On Vietnam Incident, But Secret Study Stays Classified,” *New York Times* (October 31, 2005).

The result has been a loss of credibility for the United States throughout the world, but particularly in Muslim societies. The long-term impact on United States strategic credibility and efforts in the War on Terror, and the response from its potential enemies in the post-modern era remains to be seen. In an era that will be characterized by infinite enemy capabilities and finite United States resources, the failure to seek a formal declaration of war in the War on Terror, and the subsequent lack of credibility of its justification for invading Iraq, may turn out to be strategic errors.

## **2. Public Will**

A number of factors contributed to the loss of public support for the Vietnam War, some of which are also present in the War on Terror. By all accounts, the American public overwhelmingly supported President Johnson when he sent large numbers of American soldiers into battle in Vietnam in early 1965.<sup>89</sup> In the end, however, the loss of public support for the war, and the decline in support of his policies for conducting the war ultimately convinced him to not seek reelection in 1968. Several critical elements affected the decline in public support and subsequent United States defeat in Vietnam. President Johnson made a conscious decision not to mobilize the public will of the American people, as part of the national will, in support of the Vietnam War in order to not jeopardize his Great Society programs and to protect his legacy as a social reformer.<sup>90</sup> At the time, mobilization of the national will was seen as necessary to total war, an impossibility in the nuclear age, but not necessary for a limited war. Ultimately, Johnson's failure to arouse public will in support for the war was a grave strategic error.

Other factors also contributed to the growth of the Vietnam anti-war movement in the United States and the creation of friction between the public and the federal government. Among them was the decision to grant draft deferments to college students, which fueled anti-war militancy on college campuses; the advent of television which for the first time brought graphic images of war into American living rooms on a nightly basis; and the use of body counts as a the metric for gauging success in the war effort.

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<sup>89</sup> Karnow, *Vietnam*, 16.

<sup>90</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 34.

The combined effect of graphic images of death and destruction on a large scale in what it had been told was a limited war, was to turn the public away from a war that it perceived as being fought in a cold and deliberate fashion for limited objectives. As Summers said, “We should have known better. The lessons were there in the Korean War.”<sup>91</sup>

Whether the lessons of Vietnam will be applied to the War on Terror remains to be seen. Americans were universally outraged by the graphic live broadcasts of images of death and destruction during and immediately after the attacks of 9/11. The result was an immediate galvanizing of the national will - political and public – to respond to the attacks. In subsequent years, the images of 9/11 have been replaced by graphic images of continued death and destruction, including both military and noncombatants, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other areas of the world, particularly in the Mideast. The American public has come to associate military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as the primary United States effort in the War on Terror. The steady flow of graphic images and media reports comparing Iraq to Vietnam have generated a sort of public weariness with the perceived lack of progress in Iraq. This has been reflected in the number of public polls which have indicated an increasing number of Americans consider the invasion and occupation of Iraq to be a mistake. From the limited scope of these polls, it is not clear that the American public understands the true nature of the War on Terror as a generational effort that transcends and incorporates ongoing operations in Iraq.

### **C. THE ENGAGEMENT**

Any discussion of the engagement in war must be based on the principles of war that have evolved from the philosophy of Clausewitz, and upon which United States joint military doctrine is based today. Chief among them are the concepts of the objective and the strategy for achieving it, and the offensive as shown in Table 2. A full discussion of

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<sup>91</sup> Summers, *On Strategy*, 66.

all the principles of war is outside the scope of this paper, however, a description of each can be found in *Joint Publication 3.0, Doctrine for Joint Operations*.<sup>92</sup>

The discussion, of necessity, must also come back to Clausewitz's definition of war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will," and his dictum that leaders must first establish the kind of war upon which they are embarking and—not mistake it for something else. Failure to adhere to these principles risks allowing the enemy to seize and retain the initiative in prosecution of the war, thereby greatly increasing the likelihood of defeat.

### **1. Objective**

History shows that North Vietnam had a clear and obtainable political objective in Vietnam, as indicated by the results of its actions – communist reunification of North and South Vietnam, followed by attempted communization of all of Indochina. By contrast, the United States political objective in fighting a limited war was not so clear. Domestic issues, and the larger issue of containment of Soviet and Chinese communist global expansion, overshadowed United States objectives in Vietnam. This resulted in failure by the United States to maintain the initiative in its efforts against North Vietnam. By contrast, North Vietnam was able to maintain the strategic initiative for the duration of the war.

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<sup>92</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3.0. Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 2001. [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_0.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_0.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06); See Appendix A of Joint Publication 3.0. They include: objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity.

**Principles of Strategy & War**

**The Engagement**

Objective – Direct every military operation against a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective

Strategy – Requires a knowledge of the nature of the war, and a strict definition of the enemy

Offensive – Seize, retain, and exploit the initiative

**Vietnam War**

- North Vietnamese political objective, demonstrated by results, was the communization of Indochina
- U.S. policy makers failed to frame tangible, obtainable political objectives

- North Vietnam lost at the tactical level; won at the strategic level
- U.S. won at the tactical level; lost at the strategic level

- North Vietnamese strategic offensive to conquer South Vietnam.; tactical defensive via guerilla warfare; North Vietnam had long view of the war as total war; waited for failure of U.S. public opinion over time
- U.S. strategic defensive against guerilla warfare; failed to direct strategic offensive against North Vietnam; U.S. had short view of the war as limited war, mistook guerilla operations as North Vietnamese strategy and spent its main military effort against the North Vietnamese secondary force; lost American public opinion over time

**War on Terror**

- Al Qaeda, representing Islamist terrorism, political objective is defeat or destruction of the U.S.; clear and attainable

- U.S. stated objectives are foster democracy/defeat of terrorism; not clear and attainable

- Al Qaeda cannot win at the tactical level; has achieved great strategic success

- U.S. has had great success at the tactical level; strategic aims are not clear

- Strategic offensive by al Qaeda to destroy U.S.; tactical offensive via asymmetrical warfare; long view of War on Terror as total war; waiting for failure of U.S. public opinion over time

- U.S. strategic defensive against insurgency in Iraq; inconclusive strategic offensive against al Qaeda; inconclusive view of war as limited or total, main military effort being spent against insurgency in Iraq instead of against al Qaeda proper; could lose American public opinion over time

Table 2. Objective and Strategy.

A similar process can be observed in the War on Terror. The objective of al Qaeda as the most visible United States opponent, stated publicly and demonstrated by actions, is to defeat the United States by attacking its economy and bleeding it until bankrupt or until the United States loses its national will to fight.<sup>93</sup> The United States objective in the War on Terror is not as clear. Its stated objectives of “fostering democracy worldwide” and “defeating terrorism” are at best over-broad and likely not attainable. At worst, they may be having the opposite of their intended effect by

<sup>93</sup> *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Order Code RS32759, Library of Congress (June 20, 2005), 12; Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris*, 101.

stiffening resistance against the United States. If the United States is to prevail in the War on Terror, it must apply the lesson of Vietnam and develop clear and obtainable objectives.

## **2. Strategy**

In Vietnam, failure by the United States to define the nature of the war and the nature of its enemy resulted in an inability to apply force to compel North Vietnam to its will. This is at the root of Summers' question on how the United States could achieve all its tactical objectives yet lose the war strategically. In hindsight, the problem for the United States was its application of maneuver warfare against North Vietnam's application of insurgent warfare to destroy the United States national will to fight. Since North Vietnam was focused on defeating the United States politically rather than militarily, it had the strategic advantage. Two examples illustrate how North Vietnam exploited its advantage.

In 1965, the United States conducted the Ia Drang Campaign in the Ia Drang Valley in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam.<sup>94</sup> It was the largest direct clash between the conventional regular forces of each country during the entire war. The thirty-four-day campaign resulted in an estimated 3,561 North Vietnamese killed versus 305 American dead. As a result, the American Commander in Vietnam, General William C. Westmoreland, concluded that the kill ratio – twelve North Vietnamese for each American – was evidence that a war of attrition could be successfully waged to bleed the North Vietnamese until they capitulated in defeat. The Commander of North Vietnam's forces, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, considered the results a draw because it had taught the North Vietnamese Army how to fight the Americans. Despite North Vietnamese fears of American high-tech weaponry and revolutionary airmobile tactics using helicopters that were being tried for the first time in Vietnam, his conclusion was that the same insurgent strategy that had worked against the French would work again against the Americans. History proves that Giap was correct and Westmoreland was

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<sup>94</sup> Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992), 399.

wrong – a long war of attrition actually worked to the advantage of North Vietnam. It could be argued that Giap understood the nature of his enemy while Westmoreland did not.

Three years later, in 1968, North Vietnam launched the Tet Offensive throughout South Vietnam in an effort to bring about the final defeat of American and South Vietnamese forces with conventional warfare. When the Tet offensive had expended itself in early 1969 North Vietnam had failed tactically and had suffered a crushing operational defeat. North Vietnam had suffered an estimated 60,000 to 100,000 casualties against 21,000 combined United States and South Vietnam casualties.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, the Viet Cong, North Vietnam's guerrilla force in South Vietnam, had been decimated and would not recover as a fighting force before the end of the war. The military balance in Vietnam had swung over to favor the United States.

However, more significantly, while Tet drastically changed the military situation in favor of the United States, it had even more decisively changed the political climate in favor of North Vietnam.<sup>96</sup> From 1965 to 1968, General Westmoreland had been publishing optimistic reports, based on body counts, that the United States was making progress in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese Tet Offensive came as a shock to the American public and forevermore shifted its opinion against the war and the United States administration's policies for waging it. Although the United States never again lost the military upper hand, as a result of the Tet offensive it never regained public support or the strategic advantage. Following President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection, his successor, President Nixon, was left with little alternative but to withdraw United States forces from Vietnam in defeat.

A similar process can be observed underway in the United States efforts in the Iraq front of the War on Terror. In March 2003, the United States initiated conventional military operations to swiftly invade and defeat Iraqi conventional forces and occupy the country. Less than six weeks later, in May 2003, President Bush declared the end of

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<sup>95</sup> WIKIPEDIA: The Free Encyclopedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tet\\_Offensive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tet_Offensive) (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>96</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 65.

hostilities in Iraq. Since President Bush's declaration, the situation in Iraq, as the most visible effort of the War on Terror, has been similar to Vietnam in many respects. Iraq and the War on Terror later became inextricably linked when the Bush administration declared, "Iraq is the central front in the global war on terror."<sup>97</sup>

Despite the declared cessation of hostilities, circumstances over the next six months made it clear that the United States was dealing with a determined insurgency. Two years later, in October, 2005, the number of Americans killed in Iraq passed 2,000, a plateau which has mostly occurred after the declared cessation of hostilities and which has been described by some as a psychological turning point for the American public. It is too early to assess the accuracy of this claim. During the same time period in which the United States administration continued to focus its public statements on the relative progress of establishing a lasting democratic form of government in Iraq, the leaders of the insurgency have focused its public statement on the injustices being visited on Muslims by the American presence.<sup>98</sup>

Graphic images of killed and maimed Iraqi civilians, as well as images of the Abu Graib prison abuses, have been broadcast globally and have served as a catalyst for a growing insurgency in Iraq. Reliable figures on the number of insurgents are not available but there are growing indicators that Iraq has become a training base for Muslim jihadists, well trained in urban warfare against American forces and who have begun to take the war abroad to other nations.<sup>99</sup> In the War on Terror, including in Iraq, al Qaeda cannot win at the tactical level but has had great success at the strategic level. The United States has had mixed results at the tactical level but its strategic objectives are not clear.

### **3. Offensive**

The purpose of the offensive is to retain the initiative and exploit it in order to maintain freedom of action and achieve decisive results. North Vietnam used a strategic

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<sup>97</sup> *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, 1.

<sup>98</sup> *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Rod Nordland, "Terror for Export," *Newsweek* (November 21, 2005).

offensive and a long view of the war to conduct its campaign of unification in Vietnam. While using the Viet Cong as a secondary strategic effort to wage a guerrilla campaign in South Vietnam, as early as 1962 Ho Chi Minh envisioned a long war of attrition accompanied by intensive national and international propaganda – a strategic communications campaign – to defeat American resolve. He explained it in the following statement:

Sir, you have studied us for ten years, you have written about the Indochina War. It took us eight years of bitter fighting to defeat you French in Indochina....The Americans are stronger than the French. It might perhaps take ten years but our heroic compatriots in the South will defeat them in the end. We shall marshal public opinion about this unjust war against the South Vietnamese.<sup>100</sup>

As a result of its failure to correctly define the nature of the war in Vietnam, and its application of conventional methods, the United States mistook its tactical actions against the Viet Cong insurgency in South Vietnam as the strategic offensive when in fact it had taken the strategic defensive. North Vietnam, with its application of insurgent methods had taken a long strategic view of the war. The United States, with a short view of the war, expended its main military effort against the Viet Cong insurgency. Although it had succeeded in destroying the Viet Cong as a fighting force, by 1968 the United States had by then already irrevocably lost public support for its efforts in the war.

In the War on Terror, al Qaeda has taken a long strategic view of the war as an existential war of ideas, while the United States has yet to demonstrate the same outlook. Al Qaeda appears to be directing a classic global insurgency against the United States while employing a very effective strategic communications campaign to sway international opinion.

Despite the United States administration's claims of progress, indicators are that the American public is receiving a mixed message. In an ad hoc manner reminiscent of Westmoreland's war of attrition strategy in Vietnam local commanders in Iraq have revived the process of announcing body counts to the media as an indicator of the relative success of local counterinsurgent operations.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, insurgent attacks

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<sup>100</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 64.

<sup>101</sup> Bradley Graham, "Enemy Body Counts Revived," *Washington Post* (October 24, 2005).

using improvised explosive devices have been increasing, reaching an all-time high in 2005 with 1,029 in August, 1,044 in September, and 1,029 in October of 2005. This is an increase over the average of approximately 700 a month in early 2005.<sup>102</sup>

<b><u>Nature of Attacks</u></b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Insurgent Attacks</b>	26,496	34,131	+ 29%
<b>U.S. Troops Killed</b>	714	673	- 6%
<b>U.S. Troops Wounded</b>	7,990	5,369	- 33%
<b>Car Bombs</b>	420	873	+ 108%
<b>Suicide Car Bombs</b>	133	411	+ 209%
<b>Suicide Vest Attacks</b>	7	67	+ 857%
<b>IED Attacks</b>	5,607	10,953	+ 95%

- Notes: 1. The average success rate (attacks that cause damage or casualties) = 24%  
 2. Insurgent attacks focused more on Iraqis and less on U.S. forces in 2005.  
 3. The total number of U.S. casualties dropped from 2004 to 2005 but the number of attacks increased.

Table 3. The Nature of Attacks In Iraq, 2004-2005 <sup>103</sup>

Table 3 shows the way in which the nature of insurgent attacks in Iraq has changed from 2004 to 2005. The Center for Strategic and International Studies indicates that, by one media estimate, for every United States soldier killed in Iraq at least thirteen Iraqi civilians are killed.<sup>104</sup> Its conclusion is that the trends indicate “cycles in an evolving struggle, but not signs that the struggle is being lost or won... There have, as yet, been [no] decisive trends or no tipping points: simply surges and declines.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Louise Roug, “U.S. Reports Sharp Rise in Iraq Roadside Bombings,” *Los Angeles Times*, (November 4, 2005).

<sup>103</sup> *Iraq’s Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns and Cycles in the Conflict*. Working Draft, Revised. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., February 2, 2006.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.

American public opinion polls on Iraq also show a strong similarity to public opinion polls taken in 1970 during the Vietnam War. A USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll taken in November, 2005, gave the following results:<sup>106</sup>

More than half of those surveyed wanted to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq within the next twelve months. In 1970, roughly half of those surveyed wanted to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam within twelve months.

In 1970, 56% said the decision to send troops to Vietnam was a mistake. (That number reached a high of 61% before direct American involvement in the war ended in 1973.) Now [2005], 54% say the decision to send troops to Iraq was a mistake.

[Similar to the erosion of public support for President Johnson's policies in 1968] declining support has its own consequences for Bush, making it harder for him to maintain party unity behind his policy, especially as the 2006 congressional elections approach. Concern over the course and costs of the Iraq war has become a major factor in unease about the direction of the country generally. In January [2005], a 58% majority said things were going well for the United States. By this month [November, 2005], only 49% said things were going well.

A Washington Post-ABC News Poll taken around the same time revealed similar results concerning public opinion about Iraq, and indicated that the public questions President Bush's policies similar to the way it did President Johnson's policies in 1968:<sup>107</sup>

Iraq remains a significant drag on Bush's presidency, with dissatisfaction over the situation there continuing to grow and with suspicion rising over whether administration officials misled the country in the run-up to the invasion more than two years ago.

Nearly two-thirds disapprove of the way Bush is handling the situation there, while barely a third approve, a new low. Six in ten now believe the United States was wrong to invade Iraq, a seven-point increase in just over two months, with almost half the country saying they strongly believe it was wrong.

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<sup>106</sup> Susan Page, "American Attitudes on Iraq Similar to Those in Vietnam," *USA Today*, November 16, 2005.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Moran and Dan Balz, "Bush's Popularity Reaches New Low," *Washington Post*, (November 4, 2005).

About three in four – 73 percent – say there have been an unacceptable level of casualties in Iraq. More than half – 52 percent – say the war with Iraq has not contributed to the long-term security of the United States.

The same percentage – 52 percent – says the United States should keep its military forces in Iraq until civil order is restored, and only about one in five – 18 percent – say the United States should withdraw its forces immediately. In the week after U.S. deaths in Iraq passed the 2,000 mark, a majority of those surveyed – 55 percent – said the United States is not making significant progress toward stabilizing the country.

The war has taken a toll on the administration's credibility: A clear majority – 55 percent – now says the administration deliberately misled the country in making its case for war with Iraq – a conflict that an even larger majority says is not worth the cost.

The president's handling of terrorism was widely regarded among strategists as the key to his winning a second term last year. However, questions about Bush's effectiveness on other fronts have also depreciated this asset. His 48 percent approval now compares with 61 percent approval on this issue at the time of his second inauguration, down from a 2004 high of 66 percent.

The United States is directing its main effort in the form of a conventional war against the insurgency in Iraq, which is not likely the main al Qaeda effort, and it has no significant strategic communications plan. In 2004 the *Report of the Defense Science Board on Strategic Communication* stated, “Strategic communication is a vital component of U.S. national security. It is in crisis, and it must be transformed...”<sup>108</sup> As indicated above, the United States can still lose public support for its efforts in the War on Terror. The Department of Defense acknowledges the importance of strategic communications to the War on Terror when it says,

Victory in the long war ultimately depends on strategic communication by the United States and its international partners. Effective communication must build and maintain credibility and trust with friends and foes alike, through an emphasis on consistency, veracity and transparency both in words and deeds. Such credibility is essential to building trusted networks that counter ideological support for terrorism.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication*, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Washington, D.C., September 2004, 2.

<sup>109</sup> Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2006), 91.

**D. OBSTACLES TO THE GENERATION OF FORCE – FOG, FRICTION, INFLEXIBILITY**

Strategy in war is defined as both art and science of developing and employing the instruments of national power to achieve national objectives.<sup>110</sup> Any discussion of strategy and the employment of power to achieve objectives must, of necessity, revolve around the application of force, the key element in Clausewitz' definition of war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.” To Clausewitz, physical force was the means of war and its application was its object.

The successful generation of force, and its application, are predicated on overcoming the obstacles to its generation. Two of those obstacles, the concepts of fog and friction, also come from the writings of Clausewitz in *On War*. The third obstacle to the generation of force, the concept of inflexibility, comes from van Creveld in *The Transformation of War*. Simply put, the greater the military power, the less flexible it becomes.<sup>111</sup> Van Creveld equates sheer size as a component of force. The preponderance of numerical force plays a vital role in war but it creates its own problems. The flexibility and agility of tactical military formations are inversely proportionate to their size due to more cumbersome command procedures and longer reaction times. Smaller formations have less power, but greater flexibility and agility.

These three obstacles to the generation of force – fog, friction, and inflexibility – are immutable because they pertain to the essence of force and its application in war as shown in Table 4. It is the nature of force itself that has changed from Vietnam to the War on Terror. In Vietnam, the United States relied solely on physical force in true Clausewitzian mode while the North Vietnamese considered political force to be more important. In the War on Terror the concept of force must be expanded to include all the elements of force available to the Nation – not only physical, or military force, but also diplomatic or political, social, and economic.

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<sup>110</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0. Doctrine for Joint Operations*. 2001. GL-16.

<sup>111</sup> Creveld, *Transformation of War*, 104.

<b>Principles of Strategy &amp; War</b>	<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>War on Terror</b>
Generation of Force: Fog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear U.S. objective and strategy – misjudged the nature of the war; conventional approach to defeat an insurgency</li> <li>• North Vietnam objective and strategy was clear – asymmetrical approach to defeat U.S. national will</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unclear, over-broad U.S. objectives and strategy; fragmented approach; misjudged nature of insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq; difficulty in defining the enemy</li> <li>• Al Qaeda objective and strategy is clear; asymmetrical networked approach to defeat U.S. national will</li> </ul>
Generation of Force: Friction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict between U.S. government and its constituents</li> <li>• Confusion by U.S. of “preparations for war” and “war proper”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9/11 attacks galvanized U.S. government and its constituents; friction between government agencies; growing lack of support by public</li> <li>• Confusion by U.S. of “preparations for war” and “war proper”; lack of unity of command and effort</li> </ul>
Generation of Force: Inflexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. forces were large combined arms formations, with high-technology weapons, and heavy in logistical support; agility dependent on helicopters</li> <li>• North Vietnam forces were smaller, more lightly armed; no air or sea support; fewer logistics; more agile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq are large combined arms formations, with high-technology weapons, and heavy in logistical support; agility dependent on helicopters</li> <li>• Al Qaeda-backed insurgents are more lightly armed; employing low-tech bombing campaign; fewer logistics; more agile</li> </ul>

Table 4. Obstacles to the Generation of Force – Fog, Friction, Inflexibility.

Through its conventional approach to the Vietnam War, American leadership demonstrated that it could not see the true nature of either the war or its enemy through the fog of war. This imperfect knowledge came partly from an inability to see the war through the eyes of its adversary, and partly from national hubris. After all, how could a nation as wealthy and powerful as the United States – a nation capable of destroying the world with its nuclear arsenal, a superpower that had been fought to a draw in Korea, but had never been defeated in war – how could such a nation possibly lose a brushfire war against a bunch of peasants who had no high-tech weapons of any kind, who had no transportation, no air force or navy, who traveled by foot and carried their supplies on

their backs in a far off corner of the world? Through this fog and lack of understanding, the United States committed itself to a conventional war of attrition, thinking it could bleed a smaller nation into submission.

The North Vietnamese did not see the situation through the same strategic fog. They knew they could not defeat the United States militarily so they changed the paradigm of force. Lacking the physical force to win on the battlefield, they focused on political force where they could compete as equals before an international audience, as well as in front of the American public. The Tet offensive was a mistake by the North Vietnamese leadership; however, despite the crushing tactical and operational defeat they suffered, at the strategic level they won the political war and all that was required was to continue their strategic communications campaign while waiting for the inevitable American withdrawal from South Vietnam.

Friction between the United States government and the American public during the Vietnam War worked just as Clausewitz described: The simplest things became difficult, and the difficulties accumulated. Over time, the friction became so great that the public lost faith in the government's efforts to conduct the war. Due to the unique relationship the American public has with its military – its citizen soldiers – when public support is withdrawn, the military campaign must, of necessity, come to an end. As a result of Vietnam, not only a military campaign came to an end, but a presidency as well.

Despite the effects of fog and friction, if North Vietnam had succumbed to American strategy and attempted to confront the United States militarily it would have lost the war. Through the use of high-tech weaponry and the revolutionary airmobile tactics it introduced in Vietnam, the United States Army was able to overcome the paradox of power. With the advantage of helicopters, it was able to overcome the disadvantages of cumbersome command and control, and shorten its reaction time to achieve a degree of flexibility and agility that enabled it to take advantage of its overwhelming upper hand in sheer numbers and firepower. In the end, however, sheer physical military power was not enough to win the war.

Many of the processes that caused the United States to lose in Vietnam are similarly at work in the War on Terror. Fog is readily visible in the proliferation of overlapping and often conflicting national homeland security and homeland defense strategies since the 9/11 attacks. The cumulative effect is lack of clarity of objectives and strategy. The expansion of al Qaeda globally while the United States has focused its efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the time lapse that occurred in those two countries before the United States realized it was fighting a determined insurgency, suggest again that, just as it did in Vietnam, the United States has approached the war with imperfect knowledge. Again, this imperfect knowledge comes partly from an inability to see the situation from the perspective of the Muslim world, and partly from hubris.

Friction in United States efforts in the War on Terror is evident in at least two respects. First is the growing public disaffection with United States operations in Iraq. The inability by the public to see progress in Iraq has the potential to carry over into a prolonged sense of war weariness toward the War on Terror as a whole. Simultaneously, the reorganization of the United States government has created friction of its own, which has the potential to misdirect the national war effort. The result has been incessant competition for resources and control between local, state, and federal agencies, including intelligence agencies. This has reduced national unity of effort overall in the War on Terror, and led to a preoccupation with homeland security efforts, which are better characterized as “preparations for war” instead of “war proper” in the Clausewitz model. The results of friction became readily apparent in the muddled national response in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005. The incredibly inept response at all levels of government – local, state, and federal – has led some observers to question whether, four years after the attacks of 9/11, the United States has made sufficient progress in the War on Terror.

Inflexibility continues to be an issue for the United States in the War on Terror. It is saddled with a cumbersome federal bureaucracy for homeland security, homeland defense, and intelligence. Globally, its strategic military operations are conducted regionally under the operational control of joint combatant commanders. Its solution to inflexibility from the tactical operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to the strategic levels of

command in Washington is a greater reliance on technology in the form of faster, more powerful, and more sophisticated communications, weapons systems, battlefield sensors, and helicopters. Recognition that the greatest numbers of American casualties in the War on Terror are as a result of low-technology bombs employed by insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq, has led to modifications of tactics, techniques, and procedures to mitigate the effects of the bombs. It has not led to a reduction in the frequency of insurgent bomb attacks, which have actually increased over time. Overall, the United States effort has all the characteristics of maneuver warfare similar to Vietnam, but with a greater application and reliance on technology to generate force. It is not certain that technology has given the United States an edge against the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it has become its Achilles' Heel.

Thus far, the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq have taken a similar approach to fighting the United States as the North Vietnamese did in Vietnam, with one exception: the information age has given them universal access to technology that was not available to the Vietnamese. It has also changed the concept of force and made them more resilient against it. Thus far, they have successfully employed a successful insurgent strategy to bleed American forces while working to defeat the national will to fight through a strategic communications campaign utilizing Internet postings of messages and atrocities, the Arabic news agency al Jazeera, and the global media. Through a prolonged campaign of low-tech bombings, they have inflicted a high number of casualties on the Iraqi population, and a steady number of casualties on United States forces. Most of the casualties occurred after President Bush publicly declared the cessation of hostilities in Iraq, and they have effectively slowed the democratization efforts of the United States in Iraq while creating a sense of disaffection in the American public. Neither al Qaeda nor the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq appears to have been slowed by fog, friction, or inflexibility in generating force against the United States. Quite the opposite, they have proven to be very adaptive against the application of military force and indications exist that they are spreading their efforts globally. At the time of this writing, they show no signs of abatement in their campaign to defeat the United States.

## **E. SUMMARY**

When viewed against the strategic perspective – the nature of the environment and of the engagement, and obstacles to the generation of force – the immutable principles of war advanced by Clausewitz, become apparent. Following Clausewitzian logic, strategic similarities between the Vietnam War and the War on Terror are evident. To violate these principles in the War on Terror invites possible failure as occurred in Vietnam. To not violate them, however, does not guarantee success.

Strategy in the War on Terror must also be considered against the era in which it is being waged, an era that is characterized by the transformation of cultures and of societies, including the United States, from the industrial age to the information age. The transformation of societies will drive the transformation of warfare to conform to the paradigm of the information age. Chapter IV will discuss the evolution of war and some of the transformation imperatives that will drive how the War on Terror, and future wars, will be fought.

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#### IV. TRANSFORMATION IMPERATIVES

*“...in the...post-modern, post-industrial age, warfare will not be totally dismantled. It has only re-invaded society in a more complex, more extensive, more concealed, and more subtle manner...using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal means to compel the enemy [the West] to accept one’s interests.”*

–Col. Qiao Liang and Col. Wang Xiangsui,  
Chinese Peoples Liberation Army (1999)<sup>112</sup>

*“...we must move faster – increasingly, the pace of transformation is not one we set for ourselves. National defense is no longer about the Department of Defense...nor is it conducted solely at long range.”*

–VADM Arthur K. Cebrowski (2004)<sup>113</sup>

In the War on Terror, the United States finds itself at a turning point, one which confronts the Nation with the dilemma of a continuously evolving paradigm. As implied by Col. Qiao Liang and Col. Wang Xiangsui of the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army, the Nation must rise to the threat. However, this time the threat to the nation represented by the new strategic reality is not solely military. As VADM Cebrowski indicates, the pace of change, or of transformation in order to rise to the occasion, “is not one we set for ourselves,” and threats to the Nation may come from without, as well as from within.

Viewing the War on Terror in context demonstrates that certain principles of war are immutable: It is necessary to define the nature of the war, define the enemy, and define clear and obtainable objectives and a coherent national strategy to achieve them. However, the environment – the domains in which it will be fought, and the nature of the engagement – the means and methods by which it will be fought, do change and there can never be a certainty of victory. Accordingly, while it is possible to learn from historical perspective, the Nation must also achieve an understanding of the future, the adaptive

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<sup>112</sup> Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China’s Master Plan to Destroy America* (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Publishing Company, 2002), xv.

<sup>113</sup> Cebrowski, “Transformation and the Changing Character of War,” 2.

enemy it faces, the nature of adaptive engagements, and accept that an environment of constant change and unrestricted warfare is inevitable.

In *Rethinking the Challenge of Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Cordesman provides valuable insight into the enduring nature of the principles of war as they affect the War on Terror, and the backdrop against which it will be conducted: The information age.<sup>114</sup> First, according to Cordesman, while it is possible to learn from past wars, each war is a special case and it is necessary to focus on the task at hand. Victory in the War on Terror will require a long strategic view and acceptance that the situation is truly complex. As the war evolves, the enemy will learn and adapt; for every approach there will be a counter-development and a counter-tactic. The United States must always consider its options. Containment or rollback of terrorism may at times be a better alternative than unconditional defeat. It is not possible to get the last terrorist, or even always to stay to the end, and there is a thin line between acceptable outcome, partial victory, and limited defeat. It is necessary therefore to employ ruthless self-interest mixed with only one balancing consideration: Is the probable long-term outcome really worth American sacrifice?

Second, Cordesman states that focusing solely on the military dimension is an almost certain path to grand strategic defeat in the War on Terror. It will be necessary to use all the elements of national power in unconventional ways. The concept of force must be expanded beyond mere military force to encompass social force, political force, economic force, technical force, and beyond. Shaping conflict termination, and the grand strategic aftermath, is the primary definition of victory; it will require operations over a period of many years, and more likely, decades. It will require winning hearts and minds in a practical sense. Societies cannot live on the promise that tomorrow will be better; but must survive in the harsh reality of today. It will also require brutal honesty in preparing the American people and allies for the true nature of the War on Terror. They deserve no less, and without their support, the War on Terror cannot be won.

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<sup>114</sup> Anthony Cordesman, "Rethinking the Challenge of Counterinsurgency Warfare: Working Notes," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 7, 2005. [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051107\\_counterinsurg.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051107_counterinsurg.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06).

Finally, Cordesman argues that it will be necessary to focus relentlessly on the desired outcome of the war and not individual battles or the overall military situation. The Nation cannot afford to underestimate the enemy or its own vulnerability as it did in Vietnam; capable opponents will always fight the United States either above or below its threshold of conventional warfighting capability. The weak can defeat the strong through merciless unconventional methods, and the first rule of unrestricted warfare is that there are no rules, with nothing forbidden.<sup>115</sup> To achieve victory requires winning politically, not militarily, through the use of full-spectrum operations. Establishment of democracy should be the last, and not the first, priority in the War on Terror; security, safety, and basic needs – food, water, shelter, effective governance and services, rule of law and limits to corruption, education, health, and employment all have a much higher priority. Establish these first and democracy can begin to develop and flourish; fail to establish them and fledgling democracies will likely collapse. “Positive attitudes” and “group-think” are self-inflicted wounds; what is needed is ruthless strategic objectivity.

In confronting the new strategic reality the conceptual challenge for the United States will be to transform its current strategic approach away from industrial age concepts that focus on conventional, symmetrical threats and responses that are suitable to conventional maneuver warfare. It must develop instead information age concepts that focus on non-conventional, asymmetrical threats that employ unconventional warfare, yet can be adapted to threats that employ unrestricted warfare. The practical challenge will be to address existing weaknesses and gaps in United States strategy, adapt to fundamental changes in the national security environment, and develop a grand strategy for success. The Nation must rise beyond the military operations underway in Afghanistan and Iraq – they are but fronts in the War on Terror – and embrace full spectrum operations utilizing all the elements of national power on a truly global and unrestricted scale.

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<sup>115</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, x.

## A. THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN WAR

One way to place the War on Terror in historical and social perspective, to define the enemy and to define the nature of the war, is to consider it against past wars and advancements in human societies. Figure 3 shows how the nature of conflict has changed as human societies have advanced. Using this model it can be expected that the War on Terror will take on more and more the characteristics of cultural conflict, and it will be fought using information age weapons and methods. This will be driven both by the clash of large-scale cultures, as well as by an increase in the number of nation states and non-state entities resulting from the end of the Cold War.

Regardless of the viability of these new entities on the world stage all will have access to information age resources. The result will be an increase in the numbers of entities willing to use information age methods in the application of force and violence, to achieve their aims. The strategic implications for the United States are large, making it more critical than ever for the Nation to define the nature of the War on Terror. To do otherwise would again risk failure as occurred in Vietnam.

Emerging bodies of literature, as well as historical experience, suggest that the nature of conflict is evolving along cultural fault lines, and will be transformed by the information age. Huntington, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, makes a strong argument that, with the end of the Cold War, the fault lines between civilizations are increasingly replacing political, ideological, and even geographical boundaries as the flash points for conflict and crises.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations," 8.

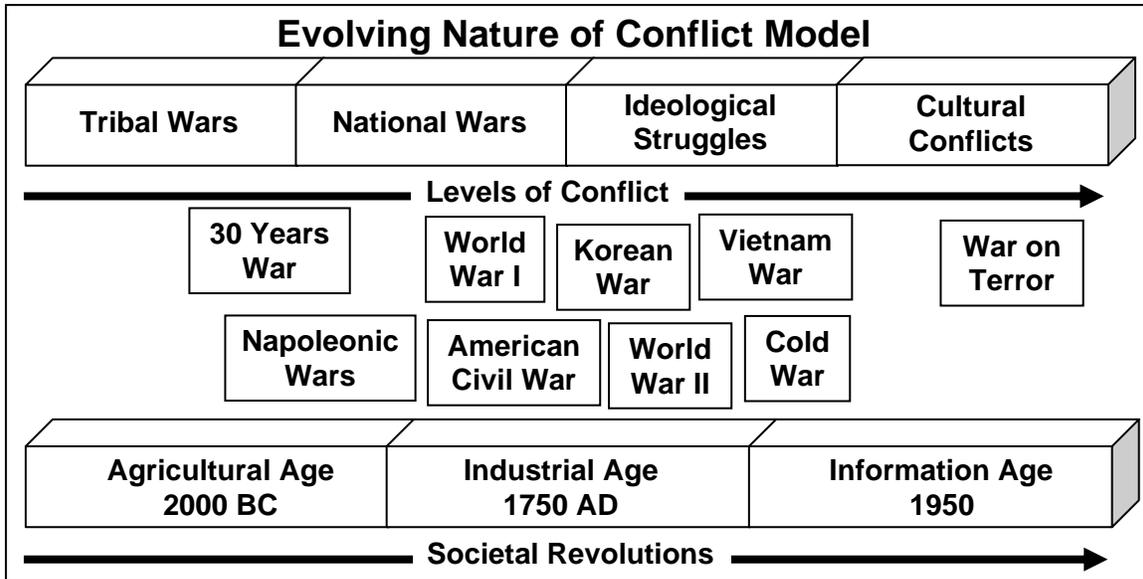


Figure 3. Evolving Nature of Conflict<sup>117</sup>

Should Huntington's argument hold true, conflict between civilizations, similar to that between Islamic States and Western States, could become the dominant global form of conflict. Non-Western civilizations and cultures, represented by both nation states as well as non-state entities, will continue to strive to acquire the economical, technological, and military strengths that accompany modernization, thereby putting them into competition with Western civilizations and cultures. It will be necessary for the United States, as the dominant Western power, to understand the basic religious, philosophical, and political underpinnings of non-Western cultures and how those cultures view their own interests. As a multi-cultural society, the fault lines of other civilizations and cultures run through the United States as well, and represent the points at which future conflict could also fracture the Nation. Future threats to the United States may originate from within, as well as from outside the Nation.

<sup>117</sup> United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, *Handbook No. 1, A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century (2004)*, 6-10. Figure 3 was compiled in part from this reference.

Another way to approach the War on Terror and place it in perspective is to consider the ways in which the means of waging war have evolved, and will continue to evolve. Figure 4 illustrates the evolution of the means of conflict, designated here into pre-modern, modern, and post-modern eras.

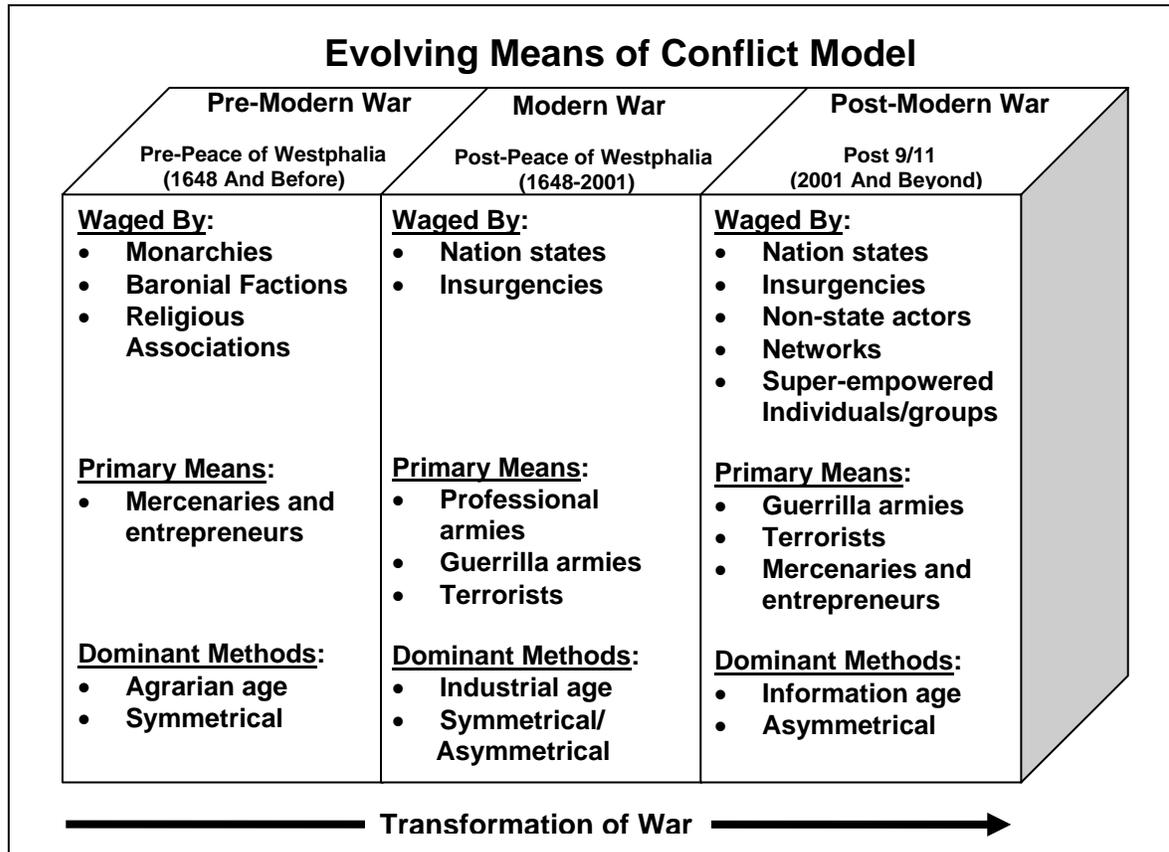


Figure 4. Evolving Means of Conflict.<sup>118</sup>

That which can be considered modern war dates back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years War of the major European continental powers, fought mainly along religious lines between Catholics and Protestants. Besides bringing the Thirty Years War to a conclusion the Peace of Westphalia, actually a series of treaties, had another longer-lasting impact - it ushered in the era of the nation state which

<sup>118</sup> Figure 4 was compiled from concepts found in: Creveld, *Transformation of War*. Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare* (2005). [http://www.of.t.osd.mil/library/library\\_files/document\\_387\\_NCW\\_Book\\_LowRes.pdf](http://www.of.t.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_387_NCW_Book_LowRes.pdf) (accessed 02/23/06); Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations," Kaplan, *Coming Anarchy, Shattering The Dreams of The Post Cold War*.

remains predominant in the world today. In the modern era the rise of nation states with professional standing armies changed completely the means by which wars are fought, if not the nature of war itself. However, the post-modern era will bring the demise of conventional war, the decline of professional standing armies, and an ushering in of means of war that are more reminiscent of the pre-modern era.

A third way to gain perspective on the War on Terror is to consider the manner and speed with which the methods utilized to conduct war have evolved in the modern era, as shown in Figure 5. In *The Sling and the Stone* Hammes describes how modern warfare in the twenty-first century has evolved as the result of political, economic, social, and technological changes that have occurred over time in societies.<sup>119</sup> Hammes discusses four generations of warfare, and hints at what the fifth generation of war may look like. Each generation represents a dialectically qualitative shift in the methods of waging war. A litmus test for whether or not a change represents a generational shift in the methods of conducting war is that, controlling for disparities in size, an army from a previous generation cannot defeat a force from the new generation.<sup>120</sup>

The rise of nation states in the modern era brought the development of First Generation (formation) Warfare (1GW), also referred to as Napoleonic war, with its utilization of armies against one another in massive line and column formations. As a result of the industrial revolution and quantitative and qualitative improvements in massed firepower Second Generation (trench) Warfare (2GW) made its first appearance during the American Civil War, and gradually replaced First Generation (formation) Warfare (1GW). It culminated with the trench warfare and mass slaughters of armies that occurred in Europe during the First World War. Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) was conceived by the Germans during World War I, and later introduced at the outset of World War II by the German Wehrmacht with its conquest of Europe. It

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<sup>119</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 14; William S. Lind; Keith Nightengale, Colonel (USA); John F. Schmitt, Captain (USMC); Joseph, W. Sutton, Colonel (USA); and Gary I. Wilson, Lieutenant Colonel (USMCR), "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation," *The Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989; Hammes uses the description of the first three generations of war from the Lind, et al, article as a basis for his description of the development of Fourth Generation War. He makes only passing reference to Fifth Generation War, which he says he is certain is currently developing somewhere in the world.

<sup>120</sup> William S. Lind, "Fifth Generation Warfare?" Center for Cultural Conservatism, Free Congress Foundation (February 2004), 1.

resulted from further improvements in available technology and is characterized by combined arms operations – sea, air, and ground – and rapid maneuver of mechanized formations. Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) has been the dominant form of conventional military warfare between nation states, including the United States, in the modern era.

Evolving Methods of Conflict Model				
Form	Methods	Primary Association	Characteristics	Focus
• 1 <sup>st</sup> Generation Warfare (1GW)	• Industrial Age, Symmetrical	• French Revolution (1789-1799)	• Mass line & column armies	• Direct destruction of enemy's close force
• 2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation Warfare (2GW)	• Industrial Age, Symmetrical	• World War I (1914-1918)	• Trench warfare	• Indirect destruction of enemy force with firepower
• 3 <sup>rd</sup> Generation Warfare (3GW) (United States)	• Industrial Age, Symmetrical	• World War II (1939-1945)	• Maneuver warfare	• Destruction of enemy command & control, logistics
• 4 <sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare (4GW) (al Qaeda)	• Industrial / Information age, Asymmetrical	• Chinese Revolution (1925-1927)	• Insurgency warfare	• Destruction of enemy political will to fight
• 5 <sup>th</sup> Generation Warfare (5GW) (Emerging)	• Information Age, Asymmetrical	• U.S. Anthrax & Ricin Attacks (2001-2004)	• Unrestricted network-centric warfare	• Decisive defeat of an enemy by any means available, military or non-military

Figure 5. Evolving Methods of Conflict.<sup>121</sup>

Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) is a concept originated by Lind and refined by Hammes in *The Sling and the Stone*. Its application was first conceived by Mao Tse Tung during the Chinese Revolution from 1925-1927, and used successfully to defeat the Nationalist armies of Chang Kai-shek and install a communist government in

<sup>121</sup> The description of the First through Fourth Generations of War was compiled from Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 1; Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, xv.

China. Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) has several characteristics which give it a dialectical edge over Third Generation (maneuver) War (3GW) and enable quantitatively and qualitatively inferior forces to win over superior government forces. It uses asymmetrical strategy and tactics, applied over long periods of time, to shift its focus away from destruction of the enemy's superior conventional military forces – which it cannot defeat – and instead toward defeat of the enemy political will to fight. It matches the political strength of one opponent against the political strength of the other. In its common form it is insurgency warfare. It was adapted and used successfully by the North Vietnamese to defeat the United States, by the Afghans to defeat the Soviet Union, and it is being used by al Qaeda today. It is also characterized by its use of networks, its willingness to accept casualties, and its long length in time. Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) is measured in decades rather than campaigns lasting months or years. The Communist Chinese fought for twenty-seven years; the Vietnamese fought the French, and later the Americans, for thirty years; and the Afghans, supported by other nations, fought the Soviets for ten years.<sup>122</sup> Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) stands unique thus far as the only type of warfare that has defeated a superpower, and it has done so on two occasions.

Currently, no commonly accepted definition exists for Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). However, given the rate at which change in warfare is accelerating it is reasonable to accept that Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) is already making its appearance. It took hundreds of years from the development of the musket and cannon for First Generation (formation) Warfare (1GW) warfare to evolve. Second Generation (trench) Warfare (2GW) evolved and peaked in the 100 years between Waterloo and Verdun. Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) came to maturity in less than 25 years.<sup>123</sup> Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) was implemented immediately upon its conception in China seventy-five years ago, around the same time that Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare was implemented in Europe.

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<sup>122</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 14.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

For the purpose of this thesis, Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) is defined as the use of “all means whatsoever – means that involve the force of arms and means that do not involve the force of arms, means that involve military power and means that do not involve military power, means that entail casualties, and means that do not entail casualties – to force the enemy to serve one’s own interest.”<sup>124</sup> It includes the appearance of super-empowered individuals and groups with access to modern knowledge, technology, and means to conduct asymmetric attacks in furtherance of their individual and group interests. Arguably, its first identifiable manifestations occurred in the United States during the anthrax attacks of 2001 and the ricin attacks of 2004. Both sets of attacks required specialized knowledge, included attacks upon federal government offices and facilities, succeeded in disrupting governmental processes, and created widespread fear in the public. To date, no individual or group has claimed responsibility for either attack, and neither attack has been solved. The attacks were quite successful in disrupting government processes and creating public fear but, thus far, their motivation remains unknown.

Today’s computer hackers, capable of disrupting governments and corporations on a global scale by attacking the Internet with malicious computer programs, may also be forerunners of super-empowered individuals and groups. They have already demonstrated that they are capable of single-handedly waging technological campaigns with overtones of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW).

The potential power of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) was also demonstrated in the Madrid bombings of 2004. On this occasion, a series of mass transit bombings conducted by a networked terrorist group in a single day, on the eve of national elections, resulted in a new Spanish government being voted into office, and the immediate withdrawal of Spanish military support to ongoing coalition operations against the insurgency in Iraq. The Madrid bombings are significant because the terrorists behind them were also major drug dealers, part of a network running from Morocco through Spain to Belgium and the Netherlands. Although the Madrid bombings are thought to have cost only about \$50,000 to carry out, law enforcement authorities

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<sup>124</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 43.

afterwards recovered nearly \$2 million in drugs and cash from the group.<sup>125</sup> In these attacks, in which a group which represented an extensive transnational criminal enterprise successfully brought about regime change in a sovereign European nation, Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) demonstrated a dialectically qualitative advantage over the methods of both Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) and Fourth Generation (insurgency) Warfare (4GW).

### **1. Pre-modern Era – Low Intensity Conflict**

In the centuries immediately prior to the Peace of Westphalia modern nation states did not exist. Wars, therefore, were not fought between governments employing standing armies. Instead, wars during the pre-modern era were fought between monarchies, baronial factions, religious associations, commercial organizations, city-states, tribal societies or even by gangs of ruffians against provinces and towns. The dominant methods and weapons for waging war were those that were available in a primarily agrarian age. The Thirty Years War, which was fought from 1618 to 1648, and culminated in the Peace of Westphalia was primarily a war between Protestants and Catholics over freedom of religion. It heavily involved the various princes and kingdoms of the Holy Roman Empire in what is today modern Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, France, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The prevalent motivating factors for waging war in the pre-modern era were religion, political gain or economic gain. Anyone who had the financial means to raise an army for profit or personal gain could do so. Extensive use was made of mercenaries and military entrepreneurs and control over them was lax. Often they worked for the spoils of war. No distinction was made between combatants and non-combatants and the greatest atrocities were committed upon the civilian populace. At times, war was scarcely discernible from simple plunder, rape, and murder, and barbarity was the order of the day.

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<sup>125</sup> David E. Kaplan, "Paying For Terror," *U.S. News & World Report* (December 5, 2005), 44.

Historical examples abound of mass atrocities and large-scale human suffering as a result of war during the pre-modern era. Much of the suffering perpetrated upon noncombatants came at the hands of soldiers of fortune. Just as often the ravages of disease followed in the paths of marching armies to further decimate the civilian populace. By some estimates, Germany lost up to a third of its population to conflict, famine and disease during the Thirty Years War.

## **2. Modern Era – Trinitarian War**

With the Peace of Westphalia came the modern era of war and the development of modern nation states, a concept that has endured for more than 350 years. The rise of nation states shifted the means of waging war from private hands and it became the province of governments. No longer could war be waged by individuals or non-state entities. To do so became characterized as crime. War in the modern era took on a structure of its own, recognized by Clausewitz, and later described by van Creveld in *The Transformation of War* as trinitarian war.<sup>126</sup> The trinity of government, army, and people within nation states and for waging war between nation states became predominant. Under the trinitarian construct of modern war governments wage war on one another, but not armies or people acting independently. Following the logic that governments wage war, the means they use are professional standing armies. This significantly changed the role of noncombatants. Under the trinitarian concept war is no longer conducted at the expense of noncombatants, but on their behalf. This idea of trinitarian war – of governments waging war, armies of combatants as the means for waging war, and the people as noncombatants on whose behalf war is waged – continues today. It has become so universally accepted that bodies of international law including such agreements as the Geneva and Hague Conventions, and international organizations such as the United Nations, have been developed to protect it and preserve it.

It was in this historical context that Clausewitz wrote *On War* and established the principles of war widely recognized by modern armies, and adhered to by the United States today. Principal among them are the concepts of the political objective, the

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<sup>126</sup> Creveld, *Transformation of War*, 35.

strategy, and the offensive.<sup>127</sup> A concept that cannot be separated from the principles of war is that of the generation of force, which derives from Clausewitz' definition of war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will." Virtually all wars between nation states in the modern era have been conducted in accordance with these principles.

Other factors have influenced the means of waging war in the modern era: The impact of the industrial revolution, the demise of conventional wars since 1945, and the ascendancy of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) in the form of insurgencies. The industrial revolution wrought not only fundamental changes in nations, but it shifted the balance of power to industry and, along with it, it brought an industrial focus to the means by which war is waged in the modern era. It culminated in the great World Wars of the twentieth century which used industrial methods to wreak death and destruction on a global scale.

The impact of the industrial revolution is still felt. The current United States operational paradigm for waging war is a platform-centric approach that evolved from the experience of the United States military during the industrial-style wars of the twentieth century. It is rooted in industrial age concepts that focus on conventional, symmetrical military threats and responses, and hierarchical command and control (C2). It is geography-based across territory and space.

In the time period since World War II the majority of the world's professional conventional war making capability and professional military expertise has become concentrated in a relatively small number of developed industrialized nation states. The advent of nuclear war capability among the world's great powers since 1945, with its associated capability for massive retaliation, has made the notion of both nuclear and conventional war between them obsolete. Simultaneously, the great powers have demonstrated to the lesser, non-nuclear nation states that neither can they compete with the great powers using conventional military means. Lacking the military expertise of the great powers, the lesser nation states are restricted to using their conventional military means only against other lesser powers and, even then, to limited success. These two

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<sup>127</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0. Doctrine for Joint Operations*. A full description of the modern principles of war used by the United States Military can be found in Appendix A.

developments, the advent of nuclear war capability and the demise of conventional war, have resulted not in the elimination of war but an increase in low intensity conflict, particularly the use of insurgencies.

Since the employment by the United States of nuclear weapons to bring World War II to conclusion, the only time that nuclear weapons have been used by one nation against another, the primary form of war worldwide has been neither nuclear war nor conventional war, but has been low intensity conflict. Van Creveld argues that, of the more than 160 armed conflicts around the world since 1945, perhaps more than seventy-five percent of them have been characterized as low intensity.<sup>128</sup> They have ranged from guerilla wars to terrorist actions or even police actions. They are characterized by their tendency to occur in less developed regions of the world, the absence of regular armies on both sides, and the non-use of high technology weapons that are prevalent in modern armies. If, as Clausewitz established and van Creveld argues, modern war is fought for political objectives then low intensity conflicts have been the most significant form of war in the past fifty years. Throughout the world they have brought great political change, including against the world's great powers, as well as former colonial empires. Even the United States discovered this lesson in Vietnam, as the Soviet Union did later in Afghanistan.

Van Creveld has described indirectly the methods of war reflected in Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) as described by Hammes, which offers a fundamental shift away from the industrial age symmetrical focus on destroying an enemy's armed forces to an information age asymmetrical focus on defeating an enemy's political and public will to fight. With its avoidance of direct confrontation with superior military forces Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) redefines war as not primarily a military function.<sup>129</sup> Clausewitz' definition of war as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" still holds true. However, concept of force is expanded to include political, economic, and social, as well as military means. Fourth Generation

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<sup>128</sup> Creveld, *Transformation of War*, 20.

<sup>129</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 39. The fundamental principle of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) was developed in 1928 by Mao Tse Tung: "Enemy advances, we withdraw; enemy rests, we harass; enemy tires, we attack; enemy withdraws, we pursue."

(insurgent) Warfare (4GW) insurgencies have achieved overwhelming success in China, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, and are currently being used by insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and worldwide by al Qaeda.

### **3. Post-Modern Era – Low Intensity Conflict Redux**

The processes by which nuclear war and conventional war have been rendered obsolete in the modern era will continue to evolve in the post-modern era but with a significant difference: They will be profoundly influenced by the advent of the information age and will cause pre-modern war to reemerge as the predominant means by which war is waged. Neither great nor lesser powers will be immune from their effects and will find themselves in conflict with entities they would scarcely have recognized or acknowledged in the modern era.

Huntington predicts that as war moves from ideological conflict toward cultural conflict national borders will mean less than the fault lines that exist between societies and cultures, and where most conflicts will originate.<sup>130</sup> The concept of nation states has been in existence for only the past 350 years, but human history has been about civilizations. Among the reasons he cites in his argument for the decline of nation states are: The differences between civilizations are basic, interaction between civilizations is making the world smaller, economic modernization and social change are separating people from local identities, economic regionalism is increasing, and cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and subject to change than political and economic differences.

Huntington's arguments are supported by Kaplan who declares that world maps showing the world broken into clean political divisions of nations are an invention of modernism, specifically European colonialism.<sup>131</sup> Kaplan argues that the concept of nation states is a Western notion, which until the twentieth century applied to only three percent of the earth's landmasses. Many nations that are labeled on maps today are not nation states at all, or are nation states in name only, particularly in the more underdeveloped regions of the world. Examples of African nations that exist virtually in

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<sup>130</sup> Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations," 8.

<sup>131</sup> Kaplan, *Coming Anarchy*, 39.

name only include Somalia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast. Notably, the majority of Middle Eastern national boundaries are a Western invention. They were created by the Treaty of Versailles when European politicians arbitrarily created the Middle Eastern national boundaries in existence today without any regard to local geography, tribal affiliations or national identity. In the Western hemisphere it can be argued that Haiti is a nation in name only.

The causes for the decline of nation states and international borders go beyond those advanced by Huntington. According to Kaplan the decline will be brought on by demographic, environmental and societal stress, particularly in underdeveloped regions. The results will be exhaustion of natural resources combined with overpopulation, unchecked spread of disease, rampant crime, and large numbers of refugees.

The impact upon the means by which war is waged in the post-modern era will be profound. As a result of the continued spread of nuclear weapons nation states cannot afford to fight one another, either by nuclear means or with conventional armies, due to the fear of massive retaliation. As the nature of war advances toward cultural conflict, and nation states decline, the result will be a return to low intensity conflict, which will resemble most closely the types of wars that were waged in the pre-modern era, prior to the Peace of Westphalia. Its root causes will be control of natural resources, survival, or the political or economic gain of the entity waging it.

Who will wage war in the post-modern era will also change, removing it from the exclusive domain of nation states. Similar to the pre-modern era the world will see the rise of low intensity conflict formed along racial, religious, social, and political lines. It will be waged by non-state entities in the form of tribal societies, city-states, religious associations, private mercenary organizations, commercial organizations, drug cartels, terrorist organizations, guerilla bands, and even super-empowered individuals and groups. In short, as in the pre-modern age, anyone who possesses the economic and technical means to wage war, and who can control a territorial or information base, will be able to do so.

Van Creveld predicts that the conventional military forces of nation states will be replaced by militias, police forces, and armed gangs.<sup>132</sup> The types of weapons used will move away from large, expensive weapons systems in favor of small cheaply manufactured weapons. The impact, according to van Creveld will be that,

As new forms of armed conflict multiply and spread, they will cause the lines between public and private, government and people, military and civilian, to become as blurred as they were before 1648. The point may come where even our present notions of policy and interest – both of which are closely associated with the state – will have to be transformed or replaced by others more appropriate to the new circumstances.<sup>133</sup>

The picture painted by van Creveld is bleak. War will be fought at close quarters with bombs and other forms of improvised explosive devices. It will be protracted, bloody, and horrible with no distinction between combatants and noncombatants. Barbarity will again become the order of the day and communities that refuse to fight for their existence will cease to exist.

Significantly, neither Huntington nor Kaplan nor van Creveld address the single-most influential event that will transform the nature and means of war in the post-modern era – the advent of the information age. Above all else, the information age and the advent of network-centric capabilities will give non-state entities the capability to compete with nation states in ways never before seen in human history. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, are likely the forerunner of things to come. Terrorism has often succeeded as a tactic but has generally failed as a strategy. However, the rise of al Qaeda and its successful 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have blurred the lines between tactics and strategy. The cost of the tactical assault by al Qaeda on 9/11 is estimated to have been around \$500,000; but the strategic impact on the United States Government is eventual damages and recovery costs in excess of hundreds of billions of dollars.<sup>134</sup> This is in addition to the resultant reorganization of the United States government, the hundreds of billions of dollars spent on global military operations in Afghanistan and

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<sup>132</sup> Creveld, *Transformation of War*, 207.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>134</sup> *Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*, 6-11.

Iraq, economic aid to restore and rebuild those two nations, and reverberations in the American economy that are still being felt more than four years after 9/11.

Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW), which has existed for seventy years, will continue to evolve as a form of insurgency, and Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will continue its ascendancy. With the 9/11 attacks al Qaeda effectively brought Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) to American shores and demonstrated that the United States is not immune from it. The anthrax attacks (2001) and ricin attacks (2005), which likely originated within the United States, further demonstrated the potential that Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) offers for super-empowered individuals and groups. Arquilla and Ronfeldt recognized the significance of the 9/11 attacks when they wrote,

Theory has struck home with a vengeance. The United States must now cope with an archetypal terrorist netwar of the worst kind. The same technology that aids social activists and those desiring the good of all is also available to those with the darkest intentions, bent on destruction and driven by a rage reminiscent of the Middle Ages...they [terrorists] confirmed the warnings...that information-age terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda might pursue a war paradigm, developing capabilities to strike multiple targets from multiple directions, in swarming campaigns that extend beyond an incident or two.<sup>135</sup>

Hammes considers the concept of netwar, as envisioned by Arquilla and Ronfeldt, as a complex, long-term type of conflict that has grown out of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW).<sup>136</sup> The implications for the United States in the information age are clear: Adapt to the new strategic reality or accept a decline in diplomatic, economic, social, and military preeminence in international affairs. The emerging Department of Defense operational paradigm offers a model for the United States to adapt its instruments of power to the information age. It is a network-centric approach based on the understanding that a fundamental shift of power has occurred from industry to information. It is rooted in information age concepts that focus on non-conventional, asymmetrical threats and responses, and non-hierarchical C2. It expands beyond the

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<sup>135</sup> John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (editors), *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (RAND Corporation, 2001). Afterword.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1382/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1382/) (accessed 03/13/06)

<sup>136</sup> Hammes, *Sling and the Stone*, 5.

geographical base of territory and space. Network-centric operations seek to create an information advantage and translate it into an operational advantage.

## **B. STRATEGIC WEAKNESSES AND GAPS**

The profusion of national strategies does not adhere to the immutable principles of war. In this respect they create seams of vulnerability which can be exploited by United States information-age opponents such as al Qaeda, as well as other nation states and non-state entities. In his assessment of American grand strategy in the post-9/11 world, Biddle outlines a number of terrorist threats to the Nation's interests.<sup>137</sup> When balanced against the multitude of overlapping and sometimes conflicting national strategies these threats expose a number of strategic weaknesses and gaps in the Nation's approach to the War on Terror and beyond:

### **1. Failure to Define the Nature of the War on Terror**

In September 2001, President Bush announced that the Nation was at war – and public statements since then have repeatedly and consistently echoed that formulation. Yet the Nation's key strategic documents have continued to treat threats in the same generic, unspecific, peacetime-like sense that they had done prior to 2001. Not until November, 2005 did the government publish its *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* – more than two and a half years after it invaded Iraq. Although they are only fronts in the larger effort, the American public has come to associate ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq as representing the War on Terror. No mention is made of the claim that in the time the United States has focused on defeating al Qaeda in these two countries, it (al Qaeda) has established or maintained its presence in ninety or more countries.<sup>138</sup> Recent reductions in public support for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate a dangerous growing divide between the public and its government over the war. If not addressed, this divide has the potential to erode the national will to fight and undermine the overall global effort in the War on Terror in a manner similar to Vietnam.

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<sup>137</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, "American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment," Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, April 2005, 5-9.

<sup>138</sup> Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris*, 70.

## **2. Failure to Define the Nature of the Enemy**

The lack of threat specificity when viewing terrorism as a methodology makes strategic thought difficult. Conventional wartime strategy has traditionally concerned itself with identifying enemy weaknesses or centers of gravity and using military force to strike at them. The issue becomes how to craft a strategy to exploit an asymmetrical enemy's weaknesses without knowing who the enemy is, or even what means of war he will employ. A war that encompasses literally any group using terrorist tactics becomes impossibly broad, engulfing a wide range of groups that includes those that pose no meaningful threat to the United States.

In the War on Terror it becomes necessary therefore to distinguish between terrorism as a process and individual terrorist groups as entities. Terrorism as a process includes phases which can be disrupted: ideological outreach; acquisition of funding, materiel, and support; recruitment; organization of efforts; indoctrination and training of personnel; planning and targeting; operations; and exploitation of results.<sup>139</sup> When viewed as entities, different specifically targeted strategies are required to defeat individual terrorist groups dependent on whether their ideologies are rooted in political, economic, cultural, or special-interest origins. Post et al identify the five principal terrorist group types as national-separatists, religious fundamentalists, other religious extremists (including non-traditional religious extremists), social revolutionaries, and right-wing extremist groups.<sup>140</sup> Effective counter-terror strategies also must address the evolving philosophies, goals, strategies, tactics and operating environments of different terrorist groups, the evolution of al Qaeda from terrorist group to global insurgency being but one example.

## **3. Failure to Define the Nature of the Objective**

For terrorism, the least ambitious goal might be containment, just to maintain the existing status quo for attacks against Americans – that is, to avoid letting the problem get any worse than it is already, and with little focus on non-American victims. A more

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<sup>139</sup> *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress. Order Code RL33160, Library of Congress, November 23, 2005, 5.

<sup>140</sup> Jerrold M. Post, Keven G. Ruby, and Eric D. Shaw, "The Radical Group in Context: 1. An Integrated Framework for the Analysis of Group Risk for Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2002), 126.

ambitious goal would be the rollback of terrorism to pre-9/11 levels. At the opposite extreme is elimination of all terrorism, of any kind, anywhere, against anyone. No explicit or specific position has been laid down in national policy to establish whether containment, rollback, or elimination of terrorism constitute the Nation's objective. Yet official statements, and the proliferation of national strategies have implied extremely broad and poorly defined, albeit ambitious goals.

More than four years after the attacks of 9/11 and the pronouncement of a War on Terror, metrics for performance related to clear and obtainable national objectives are largely lacking. Measurements are inextricably linked to strategies. However, while the goals of terrorist groups may be diametrically opposed to those of the United States, they may also be tangential in nature with each side achieving objectives and making progress according to their different measurement systems. For instance, a reduction in terrorist attacks and resulting lessening of civilian casualties may indicate progress to friendly forces, but the terrorist group involved may have simply determined that further attacks are not currently needed because it has already achieved its political objectives.

It remains an open question as to why al Qaeda has not followed its attacks of 9/11 with additional attacks on the United States. The absence of attacks could be taken as an indicator of successful Homeland Security countermeasures implemented by the United States. Another alternative could be that the 9/11 attacks allowed al Qaeda to accomplish its strategic objectives and it sees no need for further attacks on the United States at this time. Uncertainty with respect to wartime strategies and measurements make it difficult to determine or to demonstrate progress.<sup>141</sup>

#### **4. Failure to Understand the Enemy's Strategic Objectives**

Preemptive warfare against terrorism also imposes major economic costs. It has been estimated that the 9/11 attacks cost al Qaeda less than \$500,000. In response, the United States has spent literally hundreds of billions of dollars – the precise amount is not known - for homeland security and homeland defense without any evidence that these

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<sup>141</sup> *Combating Terrorism*, 2.

expenditures have been cost-effective.<sup>142</sup> Since 2001 the government has systematically failed to provide revenues sufficient to cover its costs. Barring major changes in American fiscal policy, large, sustained expenditures for ongoing preemptive warfare can be expected to create corresponding increases in federal budget deficits. Other things being equal, these economic consequences will hasten the loss of American primacy. This strategic failure plays directly into al Qaeda's clearly enunciated strategic objective of bleeding the United States economy to wear down American political and public resolve.<sup>143</sup> It has been suggested that in the War on Terror the United States is bleeding itself dry economically, similar to the way the Soviet Union did in its attempts to match western military spending during the Cold War.<sup>144</sup>

## **5. Failure to Engage International Support**

The policies necessary to minimize the risk of great power competition tend to conflict with the requirements of energetic counterterrorism. Multilateral restraint in the waging of war can clearly interfere with effectiveness of any given counter-terror campaign. In Vietnam, the Johnson Administration limited its operations against North Vietnam out of fear of great power conflict with China or the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Bush Administration saw the invasion of Iraq as central to its design for the War on Terror but its preferences have been clearly at odds with the interests of other great powers in the War on Terror. Clearly, the majority of the other members of the Group of Eight world's wealthiest industrial nations – Russia, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, and Britain – have not supported United States efforts in Iraq, with Britain being the primary exception. Other nations, including China and many Muslim nations, have actively worked against United States efforts in Iraq.

The experience of Spain illustrates the difficulties involved in holding together an international coalition of nations in the War on Terror. The March 11, 2004, Madrid train bombings, strongly linked to Islamist groups and which killed 191 and wounded another 1,460 people, created large-scale immediate reactions. Occurring on the eve of Spanish

<sup>142</sup> *Combating Terrorism*, 2.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous, *Imperial Hubris*, 100-101.

<sup>144</sup> *Combating Terrorism*, 3.

national elections, the bombings led to spontaneous mass demonstrations, an upset victory by Spain's socialist People's Party over the ruling conservative Popular Party, and an immediate withdrawal of Spain's military contingent from the United States-led coalition in Iraq.

## **6. Failure to Address the Underlying Causes of Terrorism**

The key issue here is the relative importance of eliminating the underlying causes of terror. As long as terrorism's original motivations remain, it will likely never be possible to do more than suppress the threat at a still-virulent level. The solution will be "full spectrum" warfare using all the elements of national power. The causes of terrorism vary by the motivations and backgrounds of the groups involved, whether political, economic, cultural, or special interest. In its simplest form terrorism is a method for the weak to fight the strong. The response of the strong must be similarly unrestricted and ruthless. It must consider not only the methods for confronting terrorist activities directly but simultaneously bringing the necessary social, political, economical, and technological force to bear against terrorism's public and ideological support in order to prevent it from taking root again.

## **7. Failure to Eliminate Strategic Ambiguity**

Four years of post-9/11 strategic debate have left America with a combination of ambition and ambiguity. Although the costs of strategic ambiguity were relatively modest for the first two years of the War on Terror, the continuous military campaign in Iraq has increased the financial, human, and strategic costs of leaving basic choices unmade. As a result of a rising tide of public dissatisfaction against the campaign in Iraq, resulting from increasing numbers of insurgent attacks, rising American casualties, rising costs, and a perceived lack of progress the National Security Council published its *National Strategy For Victory in Iraq*, nearly three years after the United States invaded the country.<sup>145</sup> Much of it reads less as strategy than as justification for United States actions already completed, and more significantly, it does not address United States

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<sup>145</sup> *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*.

strategy overall for victory in the War on Terror. Perhaps the most important of these ambiguities concerns the end-state objective for countering terrorism. Should the United States insist on reducing the terrorist threat to a level as close to eradication as it can manage, or should it tolerate greater terrorist violence as a quasi-permanent condition? The answer to this question implies the strategic alternatives of rollback, containment, or elimination.

### **C. FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT**

The United States must now compete in a world in which geography, military power, and time to react are no longer sufficient to guarantee its national security. It must transform its strategic thinking from the two traditional models of “inside the box” thinking and “outside the box” thinking to incorporate a third alternative of “there is no box.” The Cold War transformed the Nation’s national security structure during the period from the National Security Act of 1947, which reorganized the Department of Defense, to the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Over time, the United States and the Soviet Union came to resemble one another and both sides sought the assurance of stability to avoid either nuclear or conventional confrontation. The struggle between the two superpowers took on the aspects of a ritualized dance, with highly routinized bureaucracy and predictability.

The challenge for the United States now is to transcend the Industrial Age environment of the Cold War and engage its enemies in the Information Age environment in which the War on Terror is being waged, and in which Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will be waged. The Information Age has resulted in the death of routine and the elimination of geography and time as security buffers, and has ushered in the concept of unrestricted warfare, which incorporates the strategic thinking model of “there is no box.” This environment will be increasingly shaped by the changes below.

## 1. The Pace of Technological Change

Technology and the capabilities of America's new adversaries have been transforming at an exponential rate, at the speed of business, and according to the law of accelerating returns. It is networking and transforming societies at an ever-increasing rate of speed and reducing the primacy of nation states. Increasingly, as the locus of power shifts from industry to information lesser nation states, non-state entities, and even super-empowered individuals are acquiring the power and capabilities previously reserved to great power states. The benefits and risks of this shift are available to friend and foe alike.

United States transformation in the War on Terror, too often, has remained stalled at the speed of bureaucracy and doctrine, and remains fixated on the continued acquisition of high technology military weapons systems. Technological change will elevate warfare to a level which is hard to conceive, beyond traditional military thinking – where today's commonplace things may become tomorrow's offensive and lethal means of waging war, and today's lethal weapons systems will be rendered irrelevant. If the United States is to capitalize on technological change and the change in behaviors it brings with it, it must expand its concept of weapons in order to avoid the military weapons technology trap described by Liang and Xiangsui,

...the Americans have not been able to get their act together in this area. This is because a new concept of weapons does not require relying on the springboard of new technology, it just demands lucid and incisive thinking. However, this is not a strong point of the Americans, who are slaves to technology in their thinking. The Americans invariably halt their thinking at the boundary where technology has not yet reached.

...the new concept of weapons is a view of weapons in the broad sense, which views as weapons all means which transcend the military realm but which can still be used in combat operations. In its eyes, everything that can benefit mankind can also harm him. That is to say that there is nothing in the world today that cannot become a weapon and this requires that our understanding of weapons must have an awareness that breaks through all boundaries.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, 15-16.

## **2. The Changing Nature of Threats**

Nation-states and future peer competitors are no longer the only concern, and perhaps not the immediate primary concern, of the United States. As a result of its overwhelming success in Gulf War I (Iraq, 1991) and Gulf War II (Iraq, 2003), it is not likely that the United States will face another nation capable or willing to wage successful nuclear or conventional Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) against it. Instead, threats from both state and non-state entities, those capable of waging Fourth Generation (insurgency) Warfare (4GW) and Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) must be considered the primary threat in the post-modern era of warfare. The ability of the Nation to achieve victory in the War on Terror and beyond will depend fundamentally on the ability of American strategy to adjust and adapt to changes in the nature and character of its adversaries.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, in the quote from *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* at the beginning of this chapter, Liang and Xiangsui indicate that the threat may literally come from any direction, armed or non-armed force, military or non-military, lethal or non-lethal.

## **3. The Changing Nature of Peace**

The effects of globalization, the Internet, and interconnected economies, once cited as forces for integration and stability, are also creating a world of extremes. The new security paradigm that is emerging does not lead to a safer world. In a world made smaller, competition and conflict between interest blocs are inevitable. They will occur as a result of differences over culture, competition for scarce resources, and competition for supremacy. As Kaplan states in *The Coming Anarchy*, "The peace we think we have is only an interregnum before another cycle of conflict."<sup>148</sup> In the new strategic reality which it confronts, the United States may never see another period of uninterrupted peace.

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<sup>147</sup> Bruce Hoffman, testimony presented before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation on September 29, 2005. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2005/RAND\\_CT250-1.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/2005/RAND_CT250-1.pdf) (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>148</sup> Kaplan, *Coming Anarchy*, 182.

#### 4. The Changing Nature of Warfare

Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will change the face of war in ways never before seen. Network-centric warfare, with effects-based operations characterized by shorter decision cycles and swifter reaction times, and closer integration of information/intelligence and operations offers a step toward the transformation the Nation must make to interagency interoperability if it is to be able to defeat terrorists groups with indistinct centers of gravity and thereby win the War on Terror. Achieving victory in the War on Terror will take decades, but the Nation does not have the luxury of making the war its sole focus. Terrorism represents simply one form of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). Both the definition of war and its means and methods will expand exponentially. An indication of things to come can be taken from *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*. Liang and Xiangsui indicate how Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will go far beyond Clausewitz' accepted definition of war,

...the new principles of war are no longer “using armed force to compel the enemy to submit to one’s will,” but rather are “using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal to compel the enemy to accept one’s interest.”<sup>149</sup>

This Chinese definition of war represents a fundamental expansion of the means and methods of war great enough to create a dialectically qualitative advantage over Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW). Liang and Xiangsui describe the forms it will take as shown in Table 5. Significantly, the application of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will not be limited to the weak against the strong. With the demise of both nuclear and conventional warfare, unrestricted warfare will be practiced by both the weak and the strong, both nation states and non-state entities, against one another. It will achieve the true embodiment of strategic thinking represented by the concept that “there is no box.”

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<sup>149</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, xxii.

### **Forms of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW)**

Financial Warfare	Entering and subverting banking and stock markets and manipulating the value of a targeted currency.
Smuggling Warfare	Sabotaging a rival country's economy by flooding its markets with illegal goods and pirated products.
Cultural Warfare	Influencing the cultural biases of a targeted country by imposing one's own viewpoints.
Drug Warfare	Flooding illicit drugs across national borders and breaking down the fabric of a society through their use.
Media and Fabrication Warfare	Manipulating foreign media, either by compromising or intimidating journalists, or getting access to another country's airwaves and imposing one's own national perspectives.
Technological Warfare	Gaining monopolistic control of or having a particular edge in particular vital technologies that can be used in both peace and wartime.
Resources Warfare	Gaining control of scarce natural resources and being able to control or manipulate their access and market value.
Psychological Warfare	Imposing one's own national interests by dominating a rival nation's perceptions of its own strengths and weaknesses.
Network Warfare	Dominating or subverting transnational information systems.
International Law Warfare	Joining international or multinational organizations in order to subvert their policies and the interpretation of legal rulings.
Environmental Warfare	Weakening or subjugating a rival nation by despoiling or altering its natural environment.
Economic Aid Warfare	Controlling a targeted country through aid dependency.

Table 5. Forms of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) <sup>150</sup>

#### **5. The Changing Nature of Force**

In his definition of war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” Clausewitz considered only the application of physical military force in order to achieve political objectives. His embracement of military force as the primary force in war was appropriate to the modern era of war in which *On War* was written and held true for 170 years, but it falls short in the post-modern era of war. The Liang and Xiangsui definition of war as “using all means, including armed force or non-armed force, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal to compel the enemy to accept one's interest” is a quantum change in the concept of force.<sup>151</sup> It also implies a dynamic change in the obstacles to the generation of force. Military force will be but one form of force in post-modern war, and rarely the most significant.

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<sup>150</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, xii.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

## **6. The Changing National Security Strategy**

Strategy derives from political objectives. As a result of the new threat environment the United States can no longer rely on a reactive posture as it has in the past, but must develop a campaign plan for the strategic offensive in the post-modern era in which it finds itself. In *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment* Biddle offers two policy options for the United States in the War on Terror: either the mid-term rollback of terrorism to pre-9/11 levels, or the near-term containment of terrorism at existing levels.<sup>152</sup> He does not consider the elimination of terrorism as an option nor, given the long history of terrorism, is it likely that such an outcome is possible in the near term. Neither does Biddle, nor any of the current proliferation of national strategies, consider American grand strategy in light of 5<sup>th</sup> Generation (unlimited) Warfare (5GW). The *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* introduced the policy of preemptive actions to defeat direct terrorist threats to the United States but it stops short of considering actions beyond the disruption of terrorism.<sup>153</sup> If it is to maintain its position of hegemony in the world the United States must develop political, social, economic, and military objectives and strategy in the form of grand strategy or a master plan that is in line with the post-modern era.

## **7. The Changing Nature of Information and Intelligence**

Information Age dynamics are changing the nature of and the distinction between information and intelligence, as well as its impact on consumers. The increasing volume of unprocessed information, the speed of its transmission, and its near-instantaneous availability to a global audience by multiple means – visual, audio, print, cyber – give it both advantages and liabilities. The first information to reach an intended audience shapes its perception.<sup>154</sup> Given the proposition that the War on Terror, and the Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) to follow are “wars of ideas,” to be forced to react to information will be tantamount to losing.

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<sup>152</sup> Biddle, “American Grand Strategy After 9/11,” 28.

<sup>153</sup> *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 5.

<sup>154</sup> *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication*, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Washington, D.C. (September 2004), 38.

The paradox for the United States is that its enemies are successfully operating in an environment of free and open information flows. The availability to unlimited consumers of vast amounts of open source information will enable them to compete with the intelligence community in the “knowledge” business. It is likely that consumers of processed intelligence will question its value when so much unprocessed information is available, but faster and free of security classifications and other rules.<sup>155</sup> If the intelligence community is to compete it must adapt and take into account the expectations of intelligence consumers.

As a result of 9/11, the number of intelligence consumers at the federal, state, local, tribal, and private levels has increased exponentially. Their decision windows are not open for long and they require useful information in a rapid fashion. They must be assimilated into the mix of traditional intelligence consumers. Increasingly, the public will also take on the aspects of an intelligence consumer. Given the vast amounts of unprocessed information available, and the focus on the “war of ideas” to maintain or defeat the national will to fight, strategies for war must increasingly focus on the impacts of information on public perceptions.

## **8. The Changing Nature of Societies**

The ongoing changes in the national security environment discussed thus far will transform societies and redefine them in the form of communities held together by culture and common interests rather than geographic boundaries. The impact of the pace of technological change, and changes in the nature of threats, peace, warfare, force, and information may lead to the development of community clusters held together by self-interest, although they may not necessarily be enlightened or democratic in nature.<sup>156</sup> Instead, the motivation of communities is more likely to be driven by imperatives similar to those identified by Barber in *Jihad vs. McWorld*: market imperatives which erode national societies and give rise to non-state entities; resource imperatives under which all

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<sup>155</sup> RAND Corp., *Toward a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs*, 2005, 18.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/TR242/index.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR242/index.html) (accessed 03/13/06)

<sup>156</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Originally published 1835), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 647.

nations need something another nation has, and some nations have almost nothing they need; information technology imperatives which lend themselves to surveillance as well as liberty; and ecological imperatives driven by the impact of globalization on ecology.<sup>157</sup> As these imperatives clash with nationalism in various regions of the world, Barber predicts that they will lead to re-tribalization of large swaths of mankind. Regardless, the information age will bring about the inevitable diminishment of societies and the rise of communities in new, unimagined forms.

## **9. Expectations of the American Public**

Victory in the War on Terror, and the security of the Nation in the Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) to follow, will be dependent on the perceptions and expectations of the American Public. The visual media images of the attacks of 9/11 were seared into the Nation's psyche. Immediate public outrage was initially followed by a process of national unification which, over time, has taken on aspects of war weariness and disillusionment with the ongoing military operations in Iraq. Although it expects short-term success, the American public must be candidly, even brutally, informed and prepared for the new strategic reality facing the Nation for the next thirty to fifty years.

## **D. TOWARD A GRAND STRATEGY**

The question of what the Nation should do to win the War on Terror and prepare for Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) looms. The answer requires national objectives and a grand strategic offensive writ large on a global scale. In conjunction with the new strategic reality that the United States finds itself in, its strategy must be one of protracted and continuous effort. It will not be enough simply to achieve victory in Iraq, or even to defeat terrorism. Instead, grand strategy in the form of a master plan is required, one which will require an expanded and enlightened application of Clausewitz' first strategic principle: to define the true nature of the war and not mistake it for something else.

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<sup>157</sup> Benjamin R. Barber, "Jihad vs. McWorld," in *Globalization and the Challenges of a New Century* (Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2000), 23.

The nature of war to come will be Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) with terrorism as a component. It will be conducted throughout the information age social, information, cognitive, and physical domains. Its methods will be asymmetrical and its means will include nation states, non-state entities, and even super-empowered individuals. Over time, the United States must transform its definition of war, to include all the means of force – both military and non-military, until it matches that of its enemies. The forms of warfare it employs must be unrestricted and must reflect the Nation's ruthless self-interest. Failure to do so will have grave strategic consequences for the United States, to include gradual but inevitable decline from its current position of global leadership.

## V. CONCLUSIONS – A WAY AHEAD

*“Our challenge in this new century is a difficult one. It's really to prepare to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain and what we have to understand will be the unexpected. That may seem on the face of it an impossible task, but it is not.”*

–Donald Rumsfeld (2002)<sup>158</sup>

*“If you do not change, you can become extinct.”*

–Spencer Johnson (1998)<sup>159</sup>

In the information age, the United States is at a juncture that will severely test its political and public will, and will set the terms and quality of its future existence. As a result of its new strategic reality, it finds itself engaged in three simultaneous ongoing Fourth Generation (insurgency) Warfare (4GW) conflicts: in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and against the global insurgency being waged by al Qaeda. At the same time, it must prepare for the Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) conflict that is emerging. The fundamental changes in the national security environment described in Chapter IV will change the essential definition of what constitutes war, as well as the definition of force and its application in order to achieve victory. The result will be a fully interdisciplinary threat and an omnipresent battlespace, far exceeding modern conventional military threats, and which requires an adaptive capabilities-based response.

Against this new strategic reality, the nation has the preponderance of its military force and strategy developed around and focused on Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW). The proliferation of national strategies has resulted in an approach to the War on Terror that is diffused. It has made no declarations of war, thereby leaving its objectives and its intentions unclear. Despite public reassurances by the current administration concerning relative success in the conflict in Iraq and the War on Terror overall, there are numerous indicators of waning public support for operations in Iraq that are reminiscent of the loss of public support that led to defeat in the Vietnam War.

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<sup>158</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, remarks presented on “21<sup>st</sup> Century Transformation of the U.S. Armed Forces.”

<sup>159</sup> Spencer Johnson, MD, *Who Moved My Cheese?* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1998), 46.

The nature of the engagement in the War on Terror – clarity of objectives and strategic offensive to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative – remains to be accomplished. Thus far the United States has established three significant efforts in waging the War on Terror. First, it has spent literally hundreds of billions of dollars since 9/11 on homeland security to prevent further terrorist attacks. Outside of expenditures on military efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, most of the money spent on homeland security constitutes “preparation for war,” rather than conduct of “war proper” that will lead directly to defeat of the Nation’s enemies. Second, since 9/11 a great deal of effort has also been expended on government reorganization, including the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, the standup of United States Northern Command within the Department of Defense, and reorganization of the Nation’s intelligence network. These efforts will take many years to come to full fruition. Finally, the ongoing transformation within the Department of Defense has primarily focused on the acquisition and application of technology to leverage Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) network-centric capabilities and thereby overcome obstacles to the generation of force. Technology can always be used to achieve greater network-centricity in maneuver warfare capabilities using existing military forces, equipment, and tactics, but it is unlikely that these improved capabilities alone will be able to overcome the dialectical advantages of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) and Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW).

Reorganization – the simple reordering of existing elements of government agencies and efforts – is not enough to win the War on Terror and prepare for the ascendancy of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). To achieve true transformation – to metamorphose into an entirely new form and function and overcome obstacles to the generation of force in the information age – will require the United States to adopt a Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) styled offensive strategy.

This degree of transformation can be accomplished by accepting the Department of Defense network-centric concept of war as a building block foundation. This foundation can be adapted to incorporate interagency interoperability for a true interdisciplinary capability with existing resources, and to dictate the nature and tempo of

the engagement. Faced with infinite enemy capabilities, but finite resources to counter them, the next step will be to expand the current physical and cyber global commons to include the conceptual commons of the information age, and thereby redefine the nature of the environment. This will allow the development of new concepts and an adaptive capabilities-based approach to warfare that is characterized by the advantages of infinite capabilities, rather than the limitations of finite resources. Finally, it will be necessary to develop the necessary metrics to measure progress or failure in order to guide the national effort.

#### **A. PREMISE**

The premise of this approach is that terrorist groups are not invincible. In fact, their structures and operations can be very fragile and are certainly capable of being defeated. Further, concepts for defeating terrorist groups are universal; they can be applied to national, transnational, and international terrorist groups and they can be made to transcend terrorist group ideologies. However, it is necessary to move away from the inductive approach of the Cold War – looking for weaknesses, gaps, and deficiencies, and determining how to correct them; and toward deductive thinking and adaptive capabilities-based planning in the War on Terror – a conscious search for the unexpected and the bounds of feasibility.<sup>160</sup> This requires moving from the current Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) approach to a Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) approach. By borrowing from both traditional and emerging strategies, operations, and tactics of the Department of Defense, and adapting them to all the elements of national power, it is possible to relegate terrorist groups to their proper perspective as threats and defeat them accordingly. Key tenets of this approach are:

Terrorist groups exist and must operate in the military concept of battlespace, just as the United States and any other adversary. Battlespace is a multi-dimensional concept that traditionally includes the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains; enemy and friendly forces, facilities, weather, terrain, the electromagnetic spectrum, and the

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<sup>160</sup> Cebrowski, “Transformation and the Changing Character of War,” 2.

information environment.<sup>161</sup> Following military concepts of war, any adversary that exists and operates in battlespace can be engaged and defeated.

Terrorist groups have centers of gravity that can be disrupted, defeated, or destroyed. Clausewitz called an adversary's center of gravity "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends; it is the point against which all our energies should be directed."<sup>162</sup> Current United States military doctrine considers centers of gravity to be the sources of power from which an adversary derives its freedom of action or will to fight.<sup>163</sup>

Terrorist groups, as fragile organizations, have a limited number of asymmetrical options available to them, primarily the threat or application of armed force. By comparison, the United States, as a result of sheer size, has an almost infinite number of asymmetrical options to counter terrorist groups across all the elements of national power, including not only military armed force but also diplomatic, social, information, economic, and law enforcement options. The key to success for the United States is to bring to bear all its elements of national power to defeat foes that are both resilient and adaptive.

Transformation from industrial age methods to information age methods is essential to long-term success in the War on Terror. The emergence of al Qaeda as the likely forerunner of terrorist groups in the information age will drive transformation: industrial age concepts of battlespace must be transformed into information age domains of conflict – physical, information, cognitive, and social – and concepts of traditional centers of gravity must be transformed into critical systems, nodes, and links in order to defeat information age terrorist groups.

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<sup>161</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-0, Operations* (2001), 4-20.

<sup>162</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 595-596.

<sup>163</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0. Doctrine for Joint Operations* (2001). III-22.

## **B. SYNOPSIS OF THE CENTRAL IDEA**

### **1. The Current Operational Paradigm**

The current Department of Defense operational paradigm in Figure 6 is a Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) approach that evolved from the experience of the United States military during the industrial-scale wars of the twentieth century. It is rooted in industrial age concepts that focus on conventional, symmetrical threats and responses, and hierarchical command and control. It is geography-based across territory and space. Its standard for defending the United States against external threats is a layered defense across the operational domains that comprise the Industrial Age global commons – the land, air, maritime, cyber, and space domains.

This paradigm is based on the concept that an active layered and comprehensive defense is necessary if the United States is to detect, deter, prevent, and defeat threats as early and as far from United States borders as possible; and, if necessary recover from them when they do occur. In Figure 6 the forward regions are sovereign areas outside the United States, the approaches are conceptual regions based on situation-specific intelligence, and the homeland includes the continental United States, its territories and possessions. Its primary weakness is that it presumes that attacks will emanate from outside the homeland and be conducted in a conventional manner. It forces acceptance that military force will always be the first line of defense.

The operational seam of vulnerability in a layered defense of the United States is most pronounced in the divide between the homeland and its approaches. Outside the homeland, the Department of Defense clearly has the lead for defending the Nation. Inside the homeland, the responsibilities are not quite so clear, and either the Department of Defense or the Department of Homeland Security can have the lead for defending the Nation, depending on the situation. Significantly, this construct can be adapted for taking either the strategic defensive or the strategic offensive against conventional enemies, but it retains a conceptual seam of vulnerability since it is not designed for or capable of defeating adversaries that employ methods of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) or Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW).

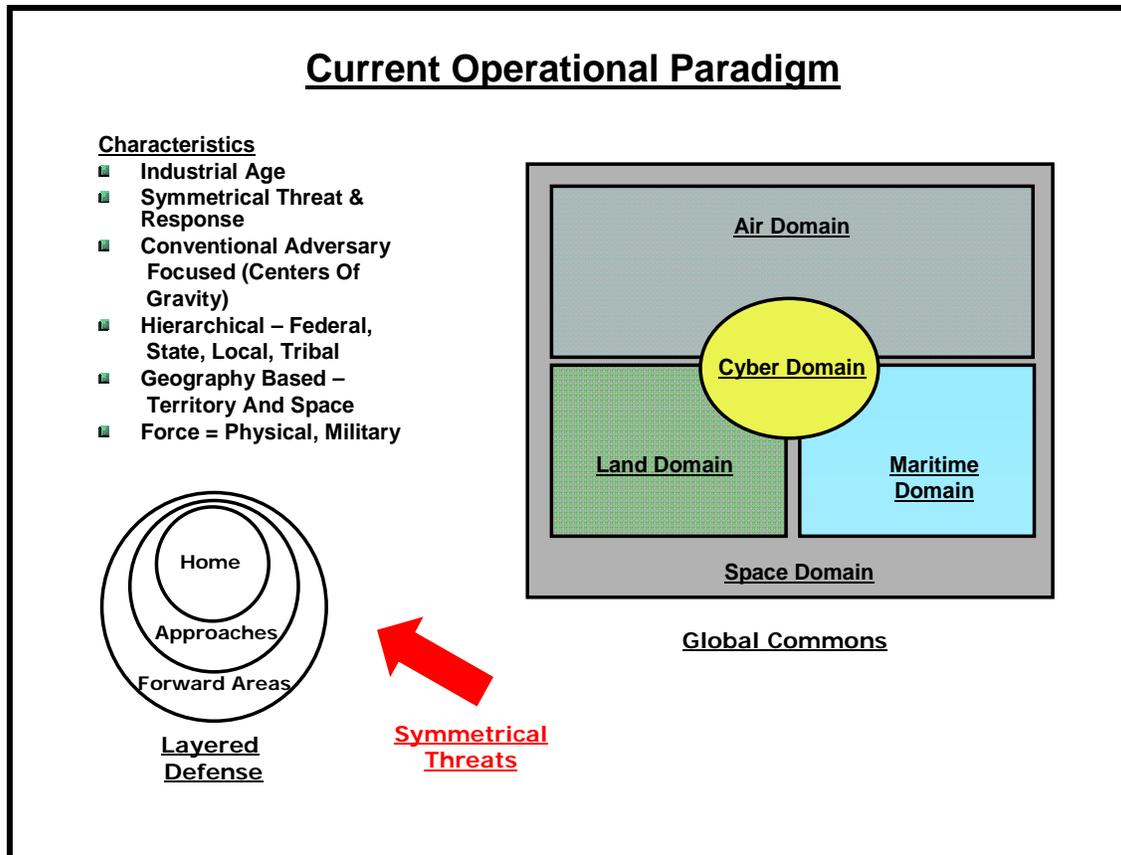


Figure 6. The Current Operational Paradigm<sup>164</sup>

## 2. The Transformation Canvas

The strategic warfare transformation canvas shown in Figure 7 was adapted from Kim and Mauborgne in *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant*.<sup>165</sup> It uses business concepts on strategy to illustrate the premise, advanced by Cebrowski in *Transformation and the Changing Character of War*, that concepts of war are evolving and adapting at the speed of business while homeland security and homeland defense in the United States continues to evolve at the speed of doctrine.<sup>166</sup> It demonstrates the transformation of warfare that must occur

<sup>164</sup> Department of Defense, *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* (2005). <http://www.dod.gov/news/Jun2005/d20050630homeland.pdf> (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>165</sup> W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2005), 25.

<sup>166</sup> Cebrowski, “Transformation and the Changing Character of War,” 6.

from industrial age, symmetrical Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) to information age Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) and Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW).

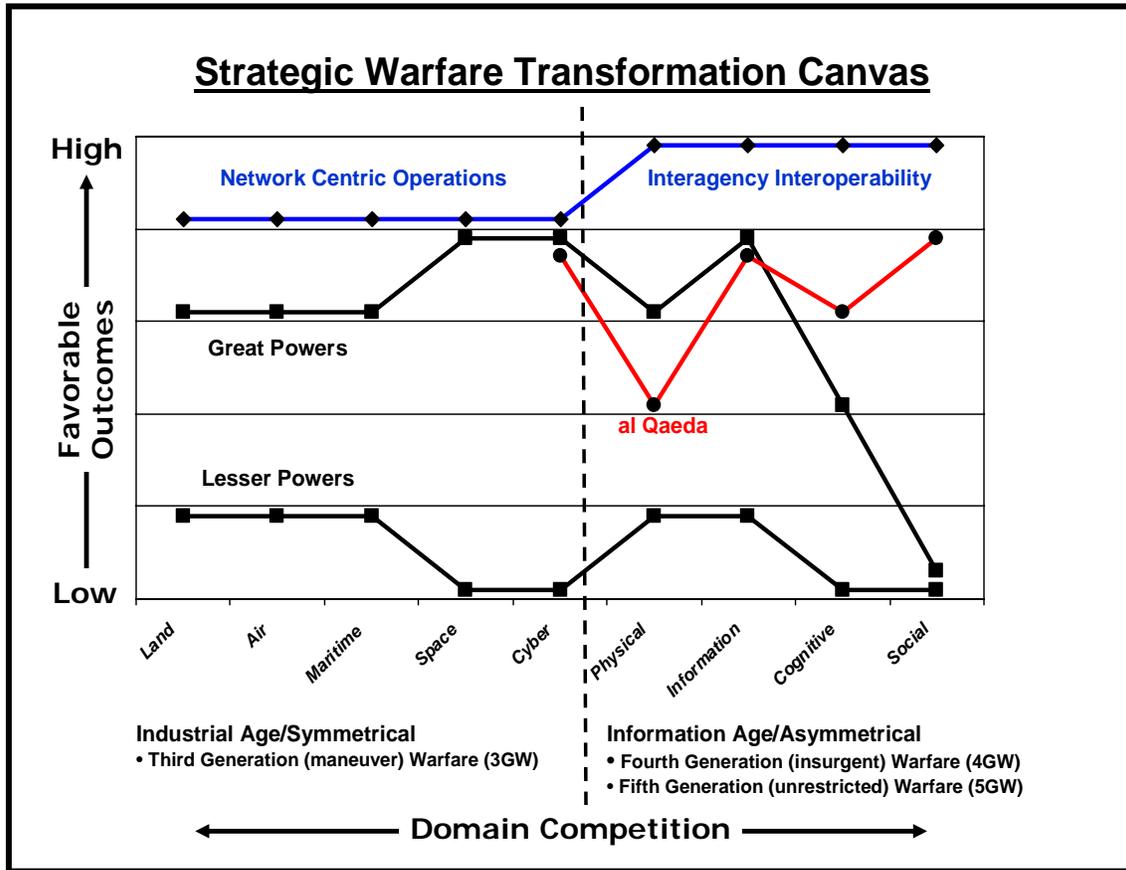


Figure 7. The Strategic Warfare Transformation Canvas<sup>167</sup>

The strategic warfare transformation canvas also shows change in the operational domains of warfare, from the industrial age global commons - represented by the land, air, maritime, space, and cyber domains, to the information age global commons represented by the physical, information, cognitive, and social domains. Information age domains are defined as:<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Kim and Mauborgne, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, 25.

<sup>168</sup> Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*, 20.

- Physical Domain – the traditional domain of warfare where a force is moved through time and space. It spans the land, sea, air, and space environments where military forces execute operations.
- Information Domain – the domain where information is created, manipulated, and shared.
- Cognitive Domain – the domain where intent, doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures reside. It is the domain where decisive concepts and tactics emerge.
- Social Domain – comprises the necessary elements of any human enterprise. It is where humans interact, exchange information, form shared awareness and understandings, and make collaborative decisions. It is also the domain of culture, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and where political decisions are made.

In the industrial age, large and small powers compete for the same thing – conventional military supremacy in the physical domains. Relative advantage or disadvantage is a matter of the amount of resources and control of available knowledge. However, significant advantage can be gained in conventional warfare in the physical domains through the application of network-centric concepts and operations.

Al Qaeda, as a forerunner of terrorist groups and non-state entities in the information age, rejects the logic of trying to compete with conventional military forces. As a non-state entity it lacks the necessary resources to employ Third Generation (maneuver) Warfare (3GW) methods. Instead, it redefines the problem and seeks to make the competition irrelevant by establishing a new paradigm for competition in the form of either Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) or Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). In so doing, it tries to avoid conventional warfare in the physical domain – land, sea, air, and space – but seeks instead to gain asymmetrical advantage in the information, cognitive, and social domains.

The information age will see the end of conventional warfare. The overwhelming battlefield successes of United States have brought the era of large-scale maneuver warfare to a close by illustrating its limitations. The reaction in many corners of the world is that there are no nations remaining that are capable of sustaining the costs of competing with the United States in conventional warfare.<sup>169</sup> Instead of relying on

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<sup>169</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, xix.

military force to wage war, strong and weak nations alike will find other ways to wage war, in other domains, by employing versions of Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) or Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). Further, this development will not be limited to nation states, but will also be available to non-state entities, as well as super-empowered individuals and groups.

Figure 7 indicates that all will be able to acquire infinite capabilities and compete equally in the information age domains. However, the United States can retain significant advantage by expanding network-centric operations to encompass interagency interoperability across all the domains. This will allow the United States to bring to bear all the elements of its national power, and again take advantage of its superior resources and concepts to defeat entities such as al Qaeda.

### **3. The Emerging Operational Paradigm**

The emerging DOD operational paradigm shown in Figure 8 is a network-centric approach based on the understanding that a fundamental shift of power has occurred from industry to information. It is rooted in information age concepts that focus on non-conventional, asymmetrical threats and responses, and non-hierarchical command and control. It expands beyond the geographical base of territory and space. Its standard for defending the United States against both internal and external threats is a universal networked defense across the operational domains that comprise the information age global commons – the physical, information, cognitive, and social domains. Network-centric operations seek to create an information advantage and translate it into an operational advantage. It accepts that military force may be neither the first nor the most significant line of defense.

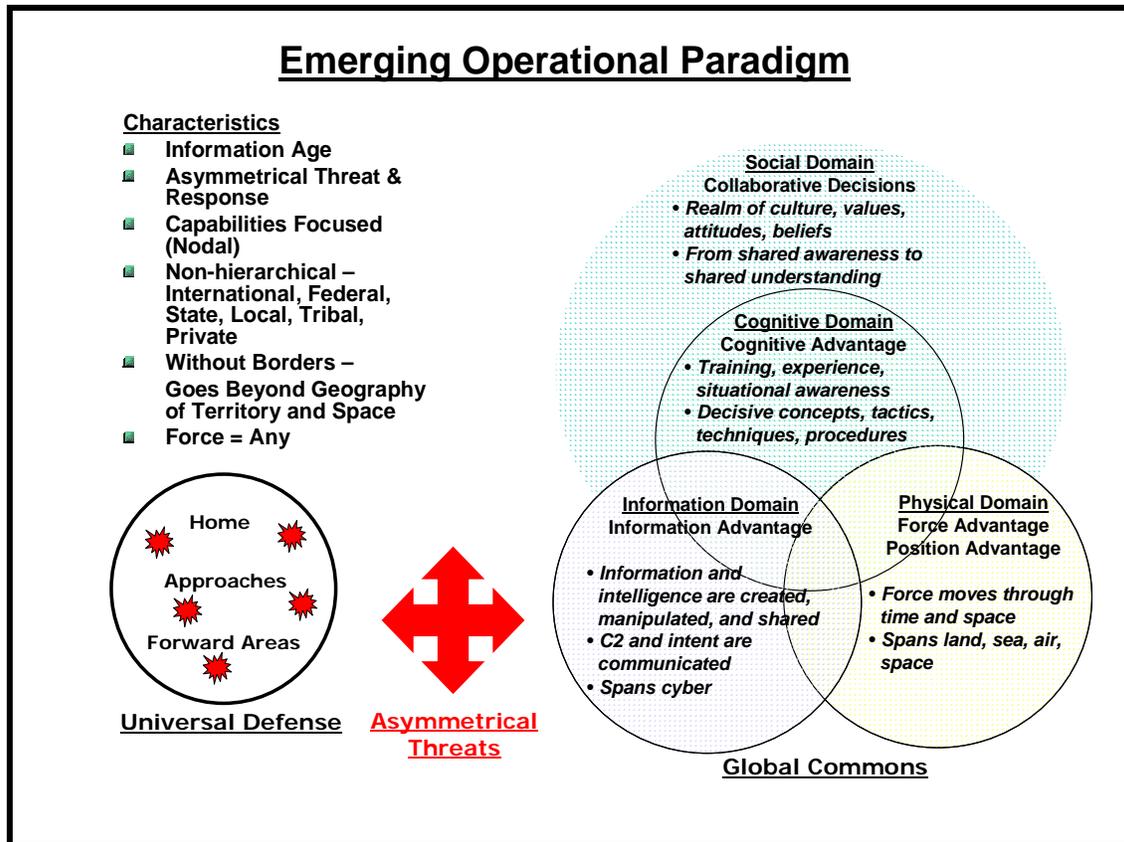


Figure 8. The Emerging Operational Paradigm<sup>170</sup>

The concept of network-centric operations, as adapted from the Department of Defense and applied to interagency interoperability, however, is not simply about technology, per se; it is also about behavior. The idea is to feed information as quickly as possible to leaders and operators in affected areas so they can make better-informed decisions about what, when, and how to respond to threats. In contrast to traditional operations that are agency-specific, network-centric operations focus on passing information and intelligence among different agencies and entities to increase their ability

<sup>170</sup> Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*.

as a whole to respond to threats. The tenets of network-centric operations, from *The Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*, that carryover directly to interagency operability are:<sup>171</sup>

- Robustly networking agencies improves information sharing.
- Information sharing and collaboration enhances the quality of information and shared situational awareness.
- Shared situational awareness enables self-synchronization, and enhances speed of decision-making and response.
- These in turn dramatically increase operational effectiveness.

#### **4. An Adaptive Capabilities-Based Approach**

An adaptive capabilities-based approach, if used correctly, can be applied directly to Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). As a result of its dialectic advantage, it can also be used to defeat terrorist groups that employ Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) techniques and strategies. Its concept carries within it the nucleus for success in the War on Terror.

Adaptive capabilities-based planning and operations require a system-of-systems understanding of the strategic operating environment – the battlespace. Once an objective is established, a more specific analysis can be conducted to determine the interconnectivity of key systems, nodes, and links across the physical, information, cognitive, and social domains as shown in Figure 9. Nodes may be persons, places, or physical things. Links are the behavioral, physical, or functional relationships between nodes.

Nodal analysis allows the development of desirable effects coupled to nodes and links, identification of actions to be applied to the nodes and links to achieve the desired effects, and allocation of resources, drawing from all the elements of national power to perform the necessary actions. Emphasis must be placed on a multi-disciplinary understanding and approach to both the environment and the engagement. The result will be virtually unlimited capability across the environment – the omnipresent battlespace –

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<sup>171</sup> Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*, 7.

far exceeding modern conventional military capabilities, and which overcomes the limitations of finite resources by applying infinite capabilities to the engagement.

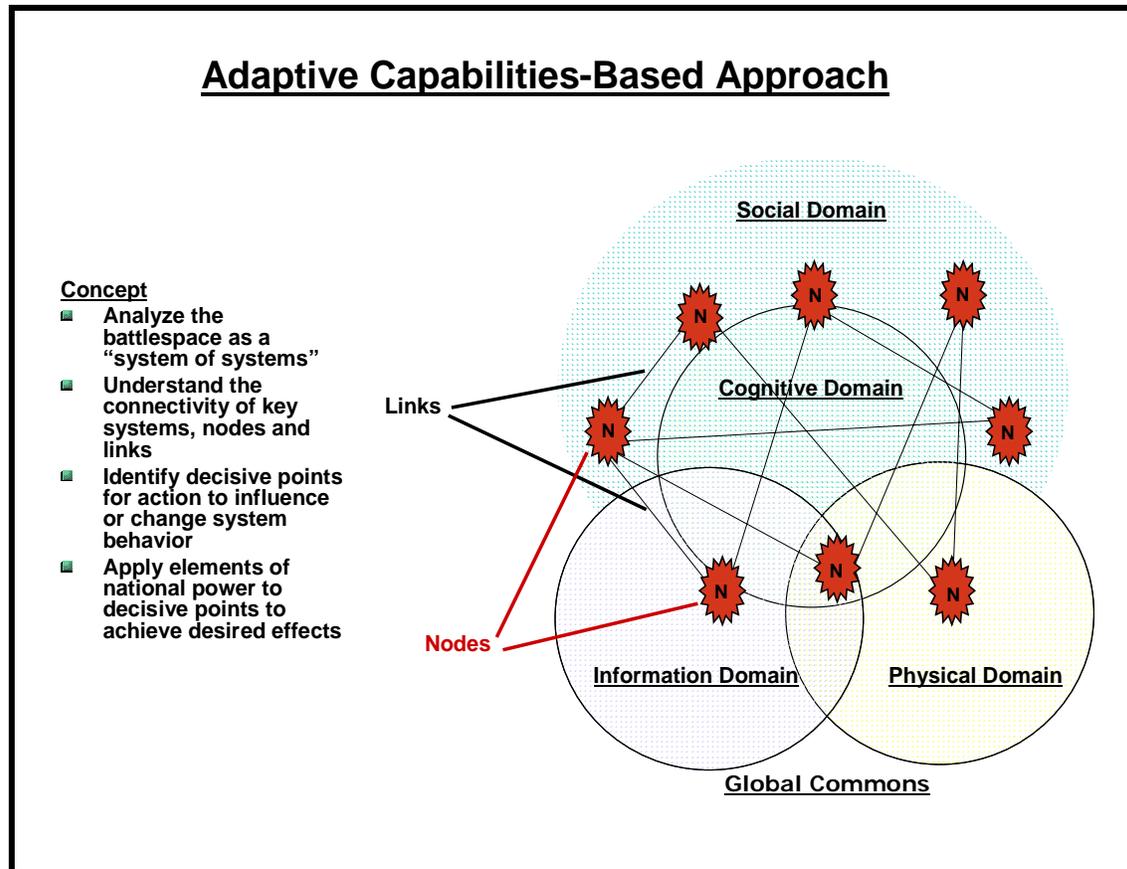


Figure 9. An Adaptive Capabilities-Based Approach<sup>172</sup>

## 5. A Counter-terror Practical Example

Adaptive capabilities-based planning and operations, applied to Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW), can be used to defeat any adversary, including terrorist groups. It is not limited to any particular type of terrorist group, but can be applied equally to defeat any of the five types of groups identified by Post et al – national-separatists, religious fundamentalists, other religious extremists (including non-traditional

<sup>172</sup> Department of Defense, *Joint Forces Command, Pamphlet 7, Operational Implications of Effects-based Operations (EBO)*, November 2004.

religious extremists), social revolutionaries, and right-wing extremist groups. Figure 10 illustrates a practical application of the concept to defeat a terrorist group using al Qaeda as an example.

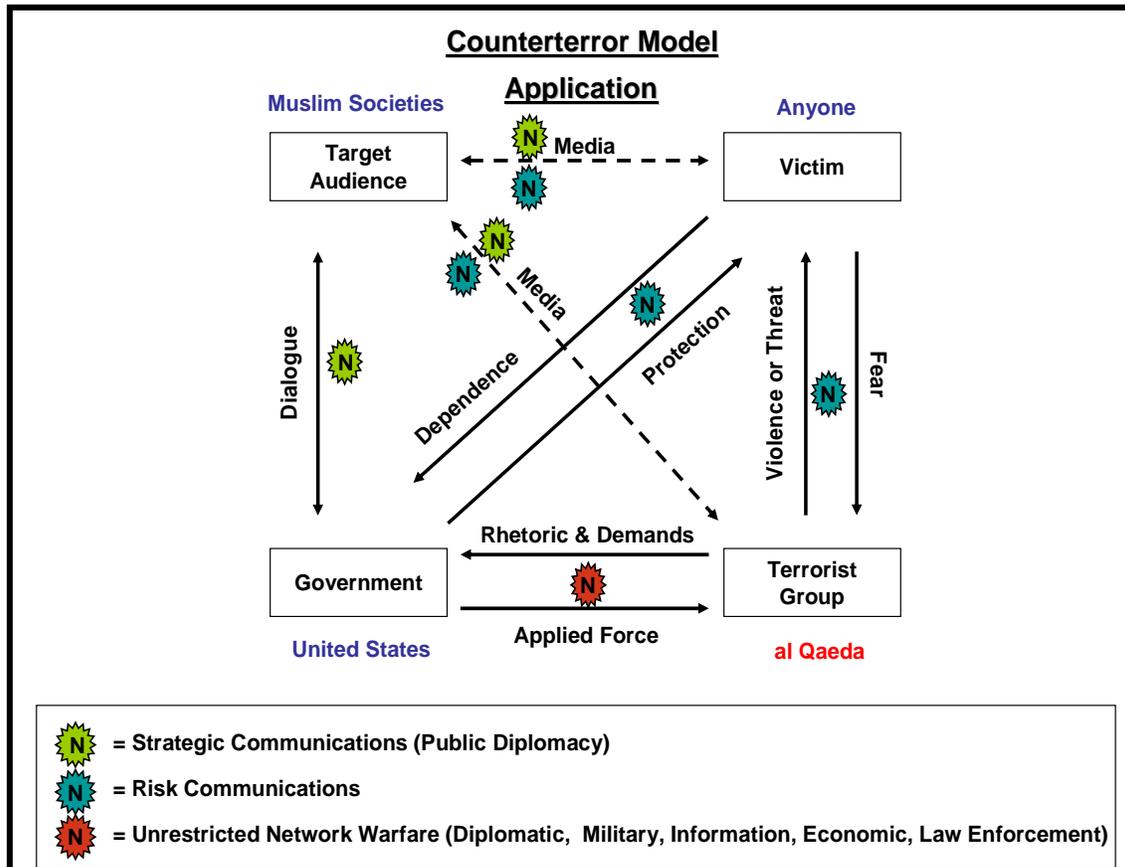


Figure 10. An Adaptive Capabilities-Based Approach to Defeating al Qaeda

The lines between the four main elements of the model – the government, the terrorist group, the target audience, and the victim – represent the various systems, links, and nodes that connect them. They are illustrative only, and there are certainly more possibilities than are shown for this example. The dotted line between the target audience and the victim in the model represents the media in all its forms – print, TV,

radio, Internet, and so on. The green, red, and blue starbursts represent nodes where risk communications, strategic communications (public diplomacy), or unrestricted force can be applied to achieve desired effects.

If risk communications and strategic communications are applied to the media links and nodes between the target audience and the victim it is possible to expose al Qaeda (or any other group) to the target audience for what they really are. Through the application of risk communications and strategic communications, the al Qaeda message to the target audience can be defeated. The challenge is to identify the links and nodes to be influenced, determine the desired effect, and apply the necessary means (positive or negative force) to them in order to attain the desired effect.

## **6. The Application of Metrics**

As stated above, wartime strategy derives from political objectives. It follows that progress in achieving objectives must also be measured. Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 provide a template for the development of metrics to be used to assess progress in the War on Terror. Assessments of resources allocated, and development of metrics for outputs and outcomes of network-centric interagency interoperability, must be developed. These should measure inputs in the form of resources allocated, outputs in the form of changes in individual and agency behaviors, intermediate outcomes in the form of accomplishments, and end outcomes in the form of strategic success.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning For Public And Nonprofit Organizations* (San Francisco, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2004), 136.

## Performance Definition

## Attributes for Application of Metrics

### Inputs (Resources)

Assessments of resources allocated against diplomatic, information, economic, military, and law enforcement options.

- Preparations for war.
- War proper.

### Resources

- Amount of dollars spent.
- Amount of materiel resources allocated.
- Numbers of staff dedicated.
- Degree of improvements made (e.g. facilities hardened).
- Degree of planning conducted.
- Number of operations conducted.

Table 6. Application of Metrics – Inputs

## Performance Definition

## Attributes for Application of Metrics

### Outputs (Products & Services) <sup>174</sup>

Assessments of the tenets of network-centric operations against interagency interoperability:

- Robustly networked agencies (organizational structures).
- Information sharing.
- Common operational picture.
- Shared situational awareness.
- Enhanced operational effectiveness.

### Product Measures <sup>175</sup>

- Quality of networking: Degree of networking, agility, net readiness of nodes.
- Quality of organic information.
- Degree of information “shareability.”
- Quality of individual information.
- Quality of individual sensemaking: Individual awareness, individual understanding, individual decisions.
- Quality of interactions: Top level, organization characteristics, individual characteristics, organizational and individual behaviors.
- Degree of shared information.
- Degree of shared sensemaking: Shared awareness, shared understanding, collaborative decisions.
- Degree of decision/synchronization: Plans synchronized, entities synchronized.
- Degree of effectiveness.

Table 7. Application of Metrics – Outputs

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<sup>174</sup> Department of Defense, Office of Force Transformation, *Implementation of Network-Centric Warfare*, 7.

<sup>175</sup> John Gartska and David Alberts, “*Network Centric Operations Conceptual Framework, Version 2.0*” (Draft), 154.

## Performance Definition

## Attributes for Application of Metrics

### Intermediate Outcomes

Assessments of derivative outcomes from diplomatic, information, economic, military, and law enforcement actions.

### Strategic

- Capture/elimination of identified terrorist leaders.
- Neutralization of terrorist political/diplomatic alliances.
- Alleviation of the social roots of terrorism.
- Increases in literacy in Islamist regions.
- Increases in individual freedoms in Islamist regions.
- Neutralization of economic policies that support terrorism.
- Elimination of multilateral support of terrorism.
- Reduction of public and ideological support of terrorism.
- Disruption of terrorist strategic planning.

### Operational

- Destruction/neutralization of terrorist means of command and control.
- Prevention/neutralization of terrorist technology acquisition.
- Elimination of terrorist financial support.
- Elimination of terrorist shelter/safe haven.
- Elimination of terrorist training camps.
- Reduction/elimination of terrorist recruiting.
- Reduction in enrollment in radical Islamist schools.

### Tactical

- Elimination of terrorist capability to “shoot,” move, and communicate.
- Reductions in illegal alien border crossings.
- Apprehensions of known terrorists.
- Dismantling of terrorist cells and networks.

Table 8. Application of Metrics – Intermediate Outcomes

## Performance Definition

## Attributes for Application of Metrics

### End Outcomes <sup>176</sup>

### Political Policy and Strategic Decisions

Strategic Outcome #1: Rollback of terrorism to pre-9/11 levels, characterized by ambitious goals to destroy it, higher immediate costs, and higher near-term risk but lower long-term risk.

- Qualitative decisions.
- Not subject to application of metrics.

Strategic Outcome #2: Containment of terrorism to current levels, characterized by more limited goals of prevention, lower immediate costs, and lower near-term risk but persistent long-term risk.

Strategic Outcome #3: Complete elimination of terrorism.

Table 9. Application of Metrics – End Outcomes

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<sup>176</sup> Biddle, “American Grand Strategy after 9/11,” 1-2.

### **C. SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the United States finds itself facing a new strategic reality. In the information age, war is the norm and periods of peace will be the exception. The Nation must win the three Fourth Generation (insurgency) Warfare (4GW) conflicts in which it is currently engaged: in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and the global insurgency being waged by al Qaeda. Simultaneously, it must transform itself and its efforts to win the larger War on Terror and prepare for the Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) which will follow it. The following strategic recommendations are made to resolve the issues identified in this thesis, eliminate strategic ambiguity, and shape the framework for transformation in the War on Terror.

The United States must clearly define the nature of the War on Terror as total war, thereby achieving Clausewitz' dictum to not mistake it for something else. In Korea and Vietnam, the Nation failed to learn the lessons of attempting to fight wars of limited objectives. The War on Terror must be approached as total war, as the application of all the elements of national power against information age enemies that are also waging total war.

The enemy in the War on Terror must be clearly defined. It is not the generic concepts of "terror" or "terrorism," nor is it solely the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. Al Qaeda is likely only the forerunner of what is to come. Specific groups and non-state entities that pose threats to United States interests, and the wider interests of the greater global community, must be identified in the same manner as hostile nations. No limitation should be placed on whether the specific enemies are national or transnational, foreign or domestic – all must be treated as information age networks capable of harming the United States and its interests.

United States objectives in the larger War on Terror must be clearly defined using measurable criteria. Establishment of "democracy" should not be an objective. Instead, a security framework should be constructed for other nations and cultures to achieve prosperity and self-determination so that democratic reforms can follow. To do this will require ruthless strategic objectivity.

The United States Congress should issue a global declaration of war to demystify the Nation's intent in the War on Terror and establish its objectives for the World to see. This would have two distinct advantages. First, it would establish members of hostile nations, listed terrorist groups, or non-state entities as enemy combatants and eliminate their possible access as criminals to the protections of the Nation's legal system. It would allow them to be pursued and defeated without recourse, using all the elements of national power – political, diplomatic, social, economic, military, law enforcement. It would also establish up front the political and public will for conducting the War on Terror, which can then be further sustained by future success.

Those activities that are “preparations for war” should be separated from activities that constitute “war proper” and lead to direct defeat of the Nation's enemies. The national strategy for the War on Terror should encompass both a defensive and an offensive capability. Although they are essential from a defensive standpoint, activities such as reorganization of government, critical infrastructure protection, and scenario-based planning at the state and local level are mitigating strategies. They will not lead to direct defeat of al Qaeda or any other adversary but, unfortunately, they have received the majority of national homeland security focus. The elements of national power – political, diplomatic, social, economic, military, law enforcement – should be employed in a strategic offensive manner to defeat or destroy the Nation's enemies.

A single, unified, national security strategy should be developed that would eliminate the proliferation of national strategies, and fuse the often competing concepts of homeland security and homeland defense into one. The current multitude of competing stand-alone national strategies should be de-conflicted and subordinated to a single overarching strategy for national security. Concurrently, the strategic gap that currently exists between the Department of Homeland Security (homeland security) and the Department of Defense (homeland defense) should be eliminated or bridged. One or the other must be given the lead for national security, or formal protocols should be mandated to direct their collaboration on both strategic defense and strategic offense in the War on Terror.

The potential for unintended consequences, those that play to the strategic objectives of the nation's enemies in the War on Terror, must be minimized. This will

require a greater understanding of the nature of the war, the nature of the enemy, and differences between cultures, as well as a fuller appreciation that the war also encompasses the social, information, and cognitive domains of conflict – in addition to the physical domain. In the War on Terror it is possible to win the conflicts in the physical domain through use of military force, but lose the conflicts in the social and information domains and thereby lose the overall war. In Vietnam, the United States won every physical battle it fought at the tactical level, but failed to win the information war at the strategic level and therefore was defeated by a lesser power. In the War on Terror, the United States can defuse the al Qaeda justification of “defensive jihad” by attaining greater understanding of the impact of its own actions on Muslim cultures. Efforts by the United States to push democracy on Muslim nations without first providing common access to basic needs, safety, security, and self-determination have a high probability of being counter-productive and achieving unintended negative results.

A national formal transformation process, modeled on that of the Department of Defense, should be established to redefine the concept of war and develop offensive and defensive strategies against both Fourth Generation (insurgent) Warfare (4GW) and Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW). As Stavridis states in *Deconstructing War*, “War is changing, and not for the better. Like much else in our world, it is essentially deconstructing and re-emerging as a changed enterprise.”<sup>177</sup> If the United States does not redefine war and its attendant rules, then it runs the risk of having it defined by its enemies.<sup>178</sup> The descriptions of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) provided by Liang and Xiangsui, and illustrated in Chapter IV, are examples of threats that will confront the Nation as part of its new strategic reality. They demonstrate clearly that no longer will one size fit all in matters of war. The United States must develop its own version of unrestricted warfare.

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<sup>177</sup> James Stavridis, Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy, “Deconstructing War,” United States Naval Institute, *Proceedings*, December 2005.

<sup>178</sup> Gartska and Alberts, *Network Centric Operations Conceptual Framework*, 7.

To defeat the principles of Fifth Generation (unrestricted) Warfare (5GW) will require a fundamental re-definition of the concept of force, obstacles to its generation, and how it is applied to achieve victory. The new concept of force will have three essential components:

- The unrestricted use
- of the elements of national power – political, diplomatic, social, economic, military, law enforcement –
- to fight total war, rather than limited war for political objectives.

This principle was touched upon by General John Abizaid in a speech at the Naval War College: “Our primary enemy is not the insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is al Qaeda and their ideology...The battle against al Qaeda will not be primarily military. It will be political, economic, and ideological. It will require the international community to fight too.”<sup>179</sup> In the end, a re-defined concept of force must incorporate the expanded definition provided by Liang and Xiangsui, “all means, including armed force or non-armed forced, military and non-military, and lethal and non-lethal to compel the enemy to accept one’s interest.”<sup>180</sup>

Finally, as stated at the beginning of this thesis the War on Terror, as the outcome of the al Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, promises to be the effort of a generation. If the United States is to sustain its effort for the years and decades that will be required for it to achieve victory, and maintain the momentum necessary to its success, it must fundamentally change its thinking. It will be necessary to move away from the inductive approach of the past – looking for weaknesses, gaps, and deficiencies, and determining how to correct them; and toward deductive thinking and adaptive capabilities-based planning for the future – a conscious search for the unexpected and an expansion of the bounds of feasibility.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> John Abizaid, General, U.S. Army. Student notes from a speech given by General Abizaid, Commander, United States Central Command, at the Naval War College in November 2005. <http://www.rfpartners.com/usma.htm> (accessed 02/09/06).

<sup>180</sup> Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, xxii.

<sup>181</sup> Cebrowski, “Transformation and the Changing Character of War,” 2.

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