

Organizing to Understand: How to Operate Effectively in the Human Domain

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

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Security professionals and academics generally agree that many of the challenges faced in Iraq and Afghanistan after 2001 were the result of a failure by national policy and strategic decision-makers to understand the political, cultural, physical, social and other human aspects of the operational environments. The human aspects of conflict stand in contrast to the traditional physical aspects of war and pose unique and complex challenges for the US national security community and military practitioners. To deal with the increasingly important human aspects, the US military has proposed the 'human domain' as a sixth domain that encompasses the other five operational domains (land, air, sea, space, and cyber). The Vietnam War and recent studies of the early years of Operation Iraqi Freedom provide sufficient material with which to analyze how the security community has approached issues in human conflict. Both were the result of misunderstanding within the human domain and had serious impacts on the war efforts. Recognizing recent failures, several nations have looked to whole of government (WoG) approaches as the means to effectively understand, organize, and operate in the changing world. This study provides two ideas for consideration as a collective solution for future implementation of the WoG approach during operations within the human domain. Most security professionals and academics would agree this type of population centric conflict is only becoming more prevalent and likely in the future environment of conflict.

Contents

Acronyms	v
Figures	vii
Introduction	1
Terminology—Same old thing under a different name?	7
In Search of the Human Domain in Vietnam	18
Learning All Over Again—Operation Iraqi Freedom	40
Unity of Effort—The Whole of Government Approach	54
Reorienting and strengthening the National Security Staff	57
Understanding in the Human Domain—Ethno-Cultural Dynamics	64
Conclusion.....	68
Bibliography	71

Acronyms

CFLCC	Combined Land Forces Component Command
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force 7
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CORDS	Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (later changed to Civil Operations and Rural Development Support)
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CRC	Civilian Response Corps
CSI	Civilian Stabilization Initiative
CSO	Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, US Department of State
DepCORDS	Deputy to the Commander, MACV for CORDS
DoD	US Department of Defense
DoS	US Department of State
DSB	Defense Science Board
HTS	Human Terrain System
HTT	Human Terrain Team
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JOPP	Joint Operation Planning Process
JPEC	Joint Planning and Execution Community
JSPS	Joint Strategic Planning System
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NSC	National Security Council
NSD	National Security Directive

NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
NSS	National Security Staff
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PNSR	Project on National Security Reform
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
S/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, US Department of State
SLTF	Strategic Landpower Task Force
SSI	Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College
TRADOC	US Army Training and Doctrine Command
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USCENTCOM	US Central Command
USD-AT&L	Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, & Logistics, US Department of Defense
USD-I	Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, US Department of Defense
USD-P	Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, US Department of Defense
USSOCOM	US Special Operations Command
VC	Vietcong
WoG	Whole of Government

Figures

1	Human Terrain System organization chart as of 2014.....	9
2	USD-I's Human Dimension of the Operational Environment.....	12
3	TRADOC human dimension framework	14
4	Conceptual depiction of the Human Domain as foundation for other domains.....	15
5	National Security System Transformation.....	60

“[T]he best-equipped army in the world can still lose a war if it doesn’t understand the people it’s fighting.”

General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff of the US Army

Introduction

Security professionals and academics generally agree that many of the challenges faced in Iraq and Afghanistan after 2001, especially in the early phases of American involvement in both countries, were the result of a failure by national policy and strategic decision-makers to understand the political, cultural, physical, social and other human aspects of the operational environments. Several analysts from Fort Leavenworth’s Foreign Military Studies Office noted in 2006: “[m]any of the principle challenges we face in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom stem from just such initial institutional disregard for the necessity to understand the people among whom our forces operate as well as the cultural characteristics and propensities of the enemies we now fight.”¹ The 2012 *Decade of War* study by the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis division of the Joint Staff J7 offered a similar critique: “In general, operations during the first half of the decade were often marked by numerous missteps and challenges as the US government and military applied a strategy and force suited for a different threat and environment. Operations in the second half of the decade often featured successful adaptation to overcome these challenges.”² The human aspects of conflict stand in contrast to the traditional physical aspects of war and pose unique and complex challenges for the US national security community and military practitioners.

¹Jacob Kipp, Lester Grau, Karly Prinslow, and Don Smith, “The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century,” *Military Review* 86, no. 5 (Sep-Oct 2006): 8.

²Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division, Joint Staff J7 (Joint Force Development), *Decade of War Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office: 2012), 1.

Mention the word war in nearly any setting, and minds often begin to conjure images of fighter jets and precision-guided bombs, cruise missiles launching from the deck of warships, tanks, rocket-propelled grenades, and many other objects of war. Most are quickly drawn to the weapons and technology of war, and only after some reflection do they begin to think about the Soldiers, Sailors, Marines or Airmen involved.³ After some time, they may finally reflect on the rest of the societies on either side of or surrounding the warring parties. Western military theory and doctrine are largely oriented in the same manner—most focus on the physical domains described by air, sea, and land (and most recently cyber) and ignore or pay little heed to the human aspects of war and conflict.⁴

The recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are examples of fast-paced lethal operations followed by long-term counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The US Army and the Department of Defense (DoD) both propose that the trend of population-centric conflict will continue, but the need for political, cultural, and social information is just as applicable for decisive action and conventional warfare. The Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics reported very bluntly in 2009, “the US military must embrace the fact that human dynamics and war are now and forever inextricably intertwined.”⁵ The prerequisite to understand

³For similar discussion and thoughts, see Daniel P. Bolger, interview by Charlie Rose, November 10, 2014, accessed January 10, 2015, available online at <http://www.charlirose.com/watch/60474716>. During the interview, Bolger argues the US military was designed “out of the ashes of Vietnam” for “short, decisive, violent campaigns against enemy conventional forces...uniformed enemy, tanks, planes and ships.”

⁴See Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977). Weigley argues that America’s military strategy from its earliest days was about the destruction of the enemy’s military force. Only since the advent of nuclear weapons has America had to formulate a national strategy that sought victory in terms other than annihilation of military forces.

⁵Department of Defense, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics*, Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), 4.

that information and to integrate it into a unified joint and interagency effort—so that leaders can influence political *and* military aims—is ever present at operational and strategic levels. In the *Small Wars Journal*, Frank Hoffman and Michael Davies of the DoD’s National Defense

University note:

While sustained conventional war appears to be less likely in the near term, the high impact of such conflicts means it is essential the Joint Force improve its understanding of the human element to maximize its effectiveness across the range of military operations. Failure to account for the human component reduces war to a mathematical exercise based on servicing targets, or worse, a doctrine with little appreciation for its linkage to policy.⁶

While not a new concept in general, the US military has proposed the ‘human domain’ as a sixth domain that encompasses the other five operational domains (land, air, sea, space, and cyber).

Along with this new domain, a new organization has been established to examine its application to military operations, especially with respect to landpower. The new organization, the Strategic Landpower Task Force (SLTF), is chaired by the Army Chief of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commander, US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and seeks as one of its goals to “expand the dialogue around the social sciences of warfare alongside the physical sciences of warfare.”⁷ The SLTF has argued landpower is especially important in the human domain because it puts forces in direct contact with those it seeks to influence, coerce, deter, or control. More importantly, recent cases of military intervention demonstrate the United States has not fully understood or efficiently organized to quickly develop an in-depth understanding of participants in conflict areas and integrate that understanding at the level of senior policy makers, preventing dominance or effective operations within the human domain.

⁶Frank Hoffman and Michael C. Davies, “Joint Force 2020 and the Human Domain: Time for a New Conceptual Framework?” *Small Wars Journal* (June 10, 2013): 4.

⁷Raymond T. Odierno, James F. Amos, and William H. McRaven, *Strategic Landpower White Paper*, Strategic Landpower Task Force, May 6, 2013, accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.arcic.army.mil/init-strategic-landpower.aspx>.

As the SLTF works to institutionalize the concept of the human domain, an examination of how the larger national and international security communities have approached the issues in human conflict is warranted. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to demonstrate how the larger interagency community addresses the human aspects of conflict. With limited examples in the national security area, it is at least worth an academic exploration to determine what, if any, concepts and organizations would maximize unified interagency effectiveness in the human domain.

In order to further the study on how to effectively operate in the human domain, this paper begins with a discussion of terminology. It then proceeds with a comparative historical examination of pacification efforts in Vietnam and the early years of Operation Iraqi Freedom(OIF). This study concludes with broad recommendations for future organizational design with increased understanding of the human domain. Because recent terminology is merely adding to the discussion of a longstanding topic, the first section discusses the most common related terms and explains what each term meant either previously or today. The use of human domain was discussed as a major component of strategic landpower and was highlighted in the white paper, “Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills,” a document tri-signed by the co-chairs of the SLTF.

With a working definition of the human domain, the paper examines American coordinating efforts and interagency organization during the American experience in Vietnam from 1950-1972. American leadership of successive presidential administrations failed to fully understand the human aspects of the situation in Vietnam following World War II, before and after the commitment of US combat troops in 1965. As a result, the overall US effort in Vietnam was largely dysfunctional and is most often viewed as unsuccessful. However, there were positive efforts to address the human aspects of the conflict that produced arguably significant results during the conduct of the war. The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support

(CORDS) program provides a well-documented example of how the US government eventually organized to understand the human domain and the operational environment, and how it developed solutions, tactics, and techniques to address the identified issues. The Vietnam War is especially useful to this study because, like the most recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, America's national strategic leadership in the military and across the national security apparatus largely misunderstood the situation they were dealing with, and only after years of relative failure did they realize their miscalculations and reorganize to address the issues more effectively.

The US government's failure to understand the human aspects of conflict and organize to operate effectively in the human domain in OIF provides the second case study for examination. Recent studies provide sufficient examples to demonstrate the United States did not have a clear understanding of the situations it was both entering and creating when it overthrew Saddam Hussein and dismantled the Iraqi government and security forces. The research examines the misunderstandings of the human domain and how, in turn, the US military and interagency were ill-organized to effectively operate.

Recognizing recent failures, several nations have looked to whole of government (WoG) approaches as the means to effectively understand, organize, and operate in the changing world. In general, however, there is an overall lack of emphasis on understanding the human aspects of conflict in this approach, specifically the foundational cultural dynamics involved. In their book, *Greater than the Sum of its Parts*, Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown provided a comparative assessment of WoG efforts by seven donor governments (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, and Sweden) toward weak, fragile, and failing states. They concluded that individual donor governments struggled to develop national policies and strategic approaches for integrated WoG responses toward fragile states, to agree on organizational structures and division of labor to address the variety of challenges, to create adequate civilian capacity to address non-military activities, to synchronize efforts with other donors, and to

adequately resource efforts for cross-departmental collaboration.⁸ None of the approaches demonstrated any serious effort to include cultural studies.

Writing for *Third World Quarterly* in 2013, Gorm Rye Olsen noted the gap between policy declarations and policies implemented by both the United States and European Union (EU) for WoG approaches towards fragile and failing states in Africa in the late 2000s. Despite the recognition of the security threat posed by failing states and the declaration for WoG approaches by both the United States and the EU, lack of national interest by the former and conflicting institutional interests among the latter resulted in limited consequences.⁹ In case examples from both entities, non-military components of the WoG approaches were lacking.¹⁰ Given the increasing numbers of population-centric conflicts, a new norm is merited to address the human domain systematically.

Despite the challenges associated with implementation, the WoG approach provides a valid and useful framework for unified effort to address ongoing and emerging issues. In 2012, the inaugural year of its PhD program in International Conflict Management, Kennesaw State University teamed with the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the US Army War College and hosted a symposium to study the role of WoG efforts to address national security challenges and opportunities. The central arguments and key findings of the symposium are outlined in SSI's

⁸Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown, *Greater than the Sum of Its Parts? Assessing "Whole of Government" Approaches to Fragile States* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), 1-8.

⁹The WoG approach is first formally mentioned as an aspect of US policy in the *2010 National Security Strategy*. See Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington DC: The White House, 2010). The November 2007 European Council Conclusions also specifically emphasized WoG approaches to fragile states. See Council of the European Union, "Council Conclusions on a EU Response to Situations of Fragility," Press release from the 2831st External Relations Council meeting, Brussels, 19-20 November 2007, accessed March 22, 2015, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/97177.pdf.

¹⁰Gorm Rye Olsen, "Whole-of-Government Approaches to Fragile States in Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no.10 (2013): 1828-1842.

publication, *Conflict Management and “Whole of Government”*: Useful Tools for U.S. National Security?. Two particular essays within the publication, each distinct in their approach and emphasis, considered together as a collective answer provide a framework for future implementation of the WoG approach. One focuses on organizational structure and proposes a transformed and fully resourced National Security Staff. The other looks at improving understanding within the human domain through ethno-cultural dynamics.

Terminology—Same old thing under a different name?

In a March 2013 report, the authors of *Operational Relevance of Behavioral & Social Science to DoD Missions* wrote as part of their way ahead that “the concept of understanding the human terrain is not new. Alexander, Sun Tzu, Napoleon, Clausewitz, T.E. Lawrence, and modern military thinkers all knew the importance of understanding the whole of the society in which they operate.”¹¹ Among those modern thinkers is General (retired) Rupert Smith and his borrowed concept of ‘war amongst the people.’ In his book, *Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, Smith argued about the “continuous crisscrossing between confrontation and conflict” and the “constantly intermingled” world of political and military activities that are focused on the intentions and will of people.¹² There is considerable current debate over terminology and how the security community will address the concepts of dealing with the

¹¹Hriar Cabayan, David Adesnik, Chandler Armstrong, Allison Astorino-Courtois, Alexander Barelka, Thomas Bozada, David Browne, Charles Ehlschlaeger, Dana Eyre, Michael Flynn, John Ferrell, LeAnne Howard, Robert Jones, David Krooks, Anne McGee, Timothy Perkins, Dan Plafcan, and Lucy Whalley, *Operational Relevance of Behavioral & Social Science to DoD Missions*, ed. Sarah Canna, report published following the “A World in Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities” Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) Conference in November 2012 (NSI, 2013), 13.

¹²Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 19-20. See chapter 7 for in depth look at recent trends (since 1991). It is only after the end of the Cold War that conflict shed the influences of the American and Soviet bloc interests. In chapter 8, Smith provides recommendations for the direction of the future use of force.

multiple facets of human influence and interaction. This study focuses on some of the current and former concepts related to the human domain that are most common in the security community: human terrain, human dynamics, human dimension, moral domain, and most recently the human domain and human aspects of military operations.

The concept of human terrain emerged as the US military engagement in Iraq became prolonged. Writing in a 2006 article, “The Human Terrain System: A CORDS for the 21st Century,” Jacob Kipp described a US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) sponsored initiative to help tactical and operational level commanders understand the human terrain, the “social, ethnographic, cultural, economic, and political elements of the people among whom a force is operating.”¹³ Drawing upon lessons from US military experiences in Vietnam, the Foreign Military Studies Office proposed the development of the Human Terrain System (HTS) to implement some aspects of the CORDS program.¹⁴

Like CORDS, reviews of the HTS and the human terrain concept are mixed. In a 2013 *Joint Forces Quarterly* article, Chris Lamb and other National Defense University associates noted that “while HTTs often did good work and were widely appreciated by commanders... [they] failed to ameliorate growing cross-cultural tensions between US forces and Afghans and were unable to make a major contribution to the counterinsurgency effort.”¹⁵ As of 2014, the HTS still exists as an intelligence function within TRADOC “as the primary and enduring social science-based human domain research, analysis, and training capability, focused on enabling leaders to remain adaptive when shaping current and future complex strategic and operational

¹³Kipp, Grau, Prinslow, and Smith, 9.

¹⁴Ibid., 10.

¹⁵Christopher J. Lamb, James Douglas Orton, Michael C. Davies, and Theodore T. Pikulsky, “The Way Ahead for Human Terrain Teams,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 70 (3rd quarter, 2013): 22

environments which support Unified Action Partners world-wide.”¹⁶ While not yet a global database, the HTS is in the process of building a knowledge center called the Sociocultural Content and Collaboration Management Service to provide a system of record for HTS sociocultural data using geospatial and network analysis tools and search and query capabilities.

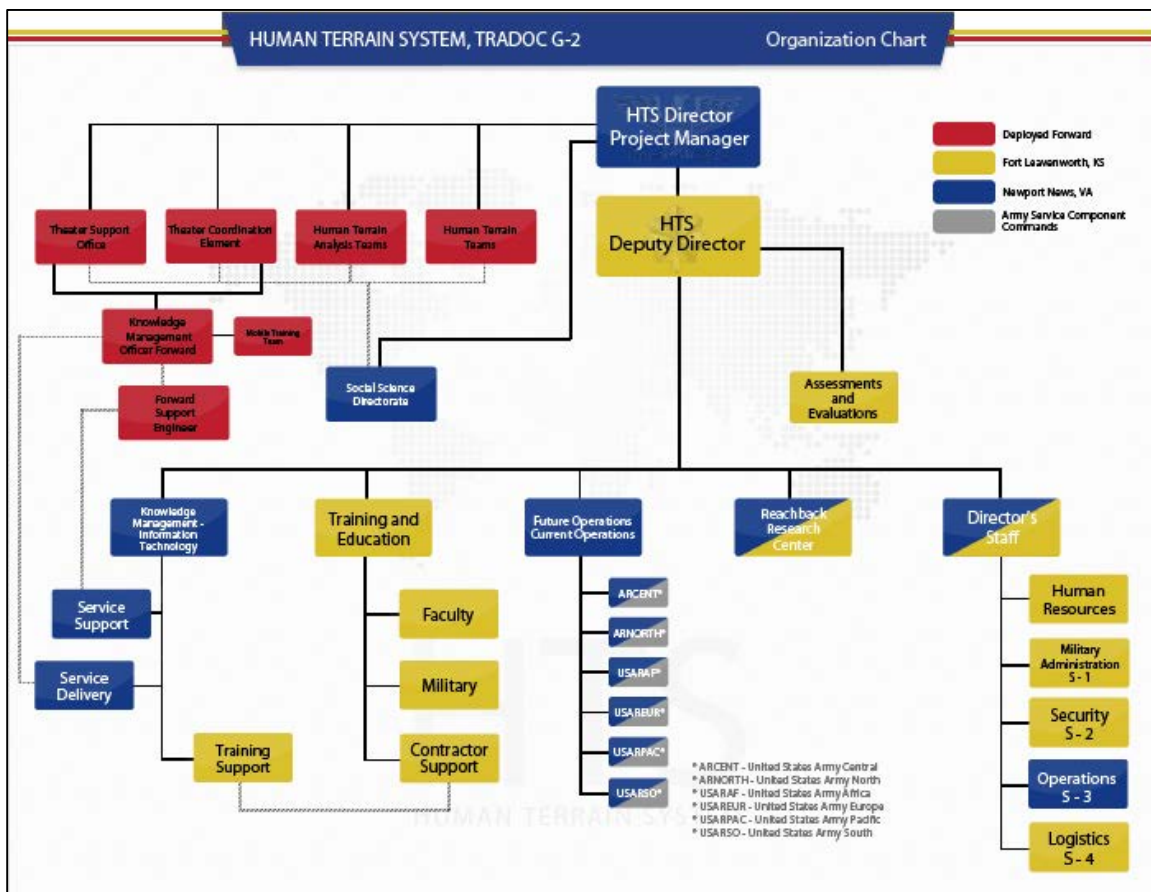


Figure 1. Human Terrain System organization chart as of 2014

Source: Human Terrain System website, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://hts.army.mil/orgChartPDF.pdf>.

¹⁶HTS mission statement as posted on web at <http://hts.army.mil/>. Accessed February 4, 2015.

In 2009, the DoD sponsored a study by the DSB to look beyond the human *terrain* per se, and focus on the *dynamics* of human interaction and relations.¹⁷ Following years of low intensity conflict in the 1980s, peacekeeping in the 1990s, and fighting irregular, population-centric wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, military professionals recognized once again the need to more fully understand and prioritize the human environment when thinking about hostilities.¹⁸ Limited conflicts, religious extremism, and the Global War on Terror forced these same military professionals to look at ways to shape the environment prior to and following hostilities. From this renewed interest, the Offices of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics directed the formation of the DSB Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics to “review and re-evaluate previous and current attempts in the DoD to assess host population social structures, culture, adversarial thinking styles and patterns of behaviors” and to provide recommendations for how to achieve operational capabilities. The DSB final report defined human dynamics as “the actions and interactions of personal, interpersonal, and social/contextual factors and their effects on behavioral outcomes. Human

¹⁷This is not meant to reflect a causal relationship. The DSB’s task to study the dynamics of human interaction did not reflect a negative opinion of the HTS or its performance.

¹⁸US Army Major John House conducted an earlier review of the human dimension of conflict from a friendly force perspective in a 1988 US Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies monograph. House referred to this human side of the spectrum of conflict as the moral domain and examines the impact of the moral domain on Soldiers during low intensity conflict as compared to mid or high intensity conflict. He concluded that the impacts of low intensity conflict on Soldiers is different based on a comparative review of the following factors: fear of death and injury to self and comrades; fatigue; physical discomfort; isolation; uncertainty; value conflicts; boredom; separation from family; climate, terrain, and culture; training and tactics; and lack of privacy. As a result, House recommended changes to Army training, organization, and doctrine to better prepare Soldiers for low intensity conflict, and suggested that national security leaders must choose how best to prepare and utilize military forces across the spectrum of conflict through a delineation of forces for various levels of conflict. See John M. House, “The Moral Domain of Low Intensity Conflict,” monograph (School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1988).

dynamics are influenced by factors such as economics, religion, politics, and culture.”¹⁹ Among the report’s key findings were recommendations to improve leadership and coordination, interagency and civil coordination, and education and training. Though ‘human dynamics’ is still active mostly in academic and philanthropic circles, the terminology seems to have given way in the security and defense communities to other conceptual terms discussed below.²⁰

Shortly after the DSB report on human dynamics, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD-I) introduced the Human Dimension in September 2010 to summarize various human related intelligence activities that could inform and guide future development of capabilities for irregular warfare.²¹ In a formal concept paper, the USD-I defined the Human Dimension as “the presence, activities (including transactions—both physical and virtual), culture, social structure/ organization, networks and relationships, motivation, intent, vulnerabilities, and capabilities of humans (single or groups) across all domains of the operational environment (Space, Air, Maritime, Ground, and Cyber).”²² The definition is visually depicted in figure 2 and demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of human presence and activity across all

¹⁹Department of Defense, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics*, vii.

²⁰For example, see <http://www.humandynamics.com/>, accessed February 5, 2015. Touted as an essential tool for the 21st century, this website promotes teaching programs and asserts “Human Dynamics provides foundational tools that promote self-awareness and development professionally and personally, through teaching people to communicate and work together effectively.”

²¹In 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates issued a DoD Directive to “recognize that IW [Irregular Warfare] is as strategically important as traditional warfare.” See Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare* (DOD Directive 3000.07), Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1, 2008). The directive was reissued with no significant changes by Secretary Hagel on August 28, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/300007p.pdf>.

²²Department of Defense, “The Human Dimension: Analyzing the Role of the Human Element in the Operational Environment,” Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Concept Paper, September 15, 2010, 4.

five domains of military operations. While implied rather than specifically stated in the definition, the concept paper describes the application of the Human Dimension across the full range of military operations as well. Finally, the paper notes that the Human Dimension and Human Dimension Awareness are intended to advance operational understanding across all five domains (effectively a Ground, Air, Space, Maritime or Cyber Dimension Awareness) rather than separating the human aspect of operations into its own domain of the operational environment.²³

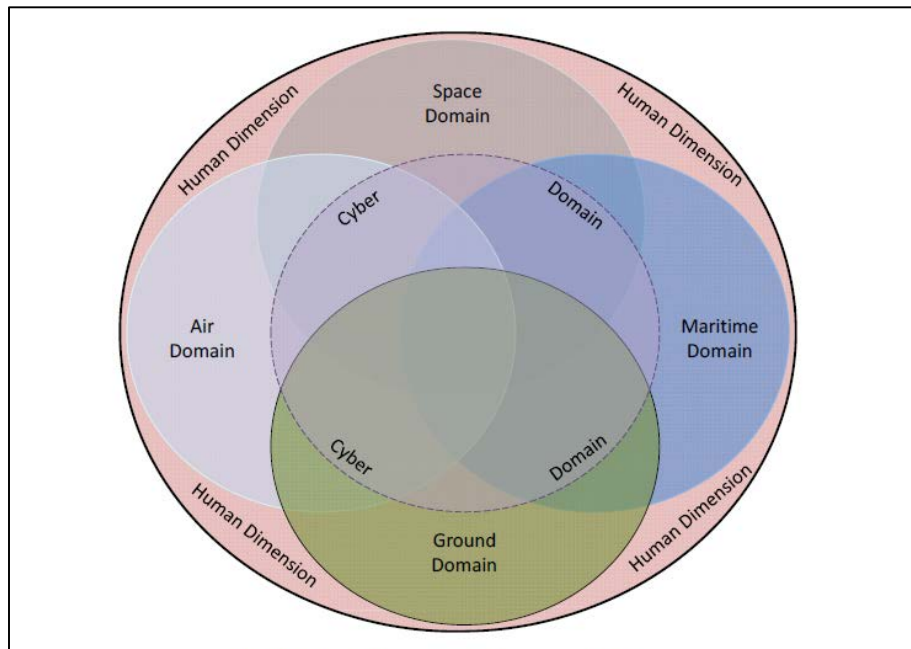


Figure 2. USD-I's Human Dimension of the Operational Environment

Source: Department of Defense, "The Human Dimension: Analyzing the Role of the Human Element in the Operational Environment," Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Concept Paper, September 15, 2010, 2-5.

In contrast to the USD-I Human Dimension concept, TRADOC re-released *The U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept* in May 2014, originally published in June 2008. Both TRADOC versions reflect formal research and conceptual thinking into the capabilities the Army requires to meet the challenges of the current and future operational environment. The 2014

²³Ibid., 2-5.

version defined the human dimension as “the cognitive, physical, and social components of Soldier, Army Civilian, leader, and organizational development and performance essential to raise, prepare, and employ the Army in unified land operations.”²⁴ While these are important aspects and demonstrate progress to address the human component of operations, this concept is clearly centered entirely on U.S. Army forces. Unlike the USD-I Human Dimension concept, TRADOC’s human dimension does not recognize or discuss local populations or indigenous forces, enemy forces, and does not address how US Army forces interact with these other aspects of the operating environment. It seeks to achieve superior warfighting effectiveness through human performance optimization within the US Army.²⁵

Though TRADOC’s discussion of the human dimension centers on US Army forces, the framework depicted in figure 3 is useful to the discussion writ large. It shows the complexity of the human dimension (again narrowly confined to that of US Army forces) “and the interrelationships and interdependence of various factors.”²⁶ It demonstrates that the composition of just one aspect of the environment, the US Army’s personnel, has many factors impacting its performance and capabilities. Extrapolation of this example to the rest of the operating environment offers a limited sample of the many aspects affecting actions and outcomes.

²⁴US Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (TRADOC PAM) 525-3-7 *The U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept* (Fort Eustis, VA: Government Printing Office, 2014), 33. The 2014 version updates changes the moral component in the human dimension definition to a social component and expands the scope of the concept to include the total army force (including Department of the Army civilians and contractors). In general, the 2014 version provides more detail reflecting further study, mostly in the area of human performance optimization.

²⁵Ibid., 5. The concept defines human performance optimization as “the process of applying knowledge, skills, and emerging technologies to improve and preserve the capabilities of Department of Defense personnel to execute essential tasks.”

²⁶Ibid.

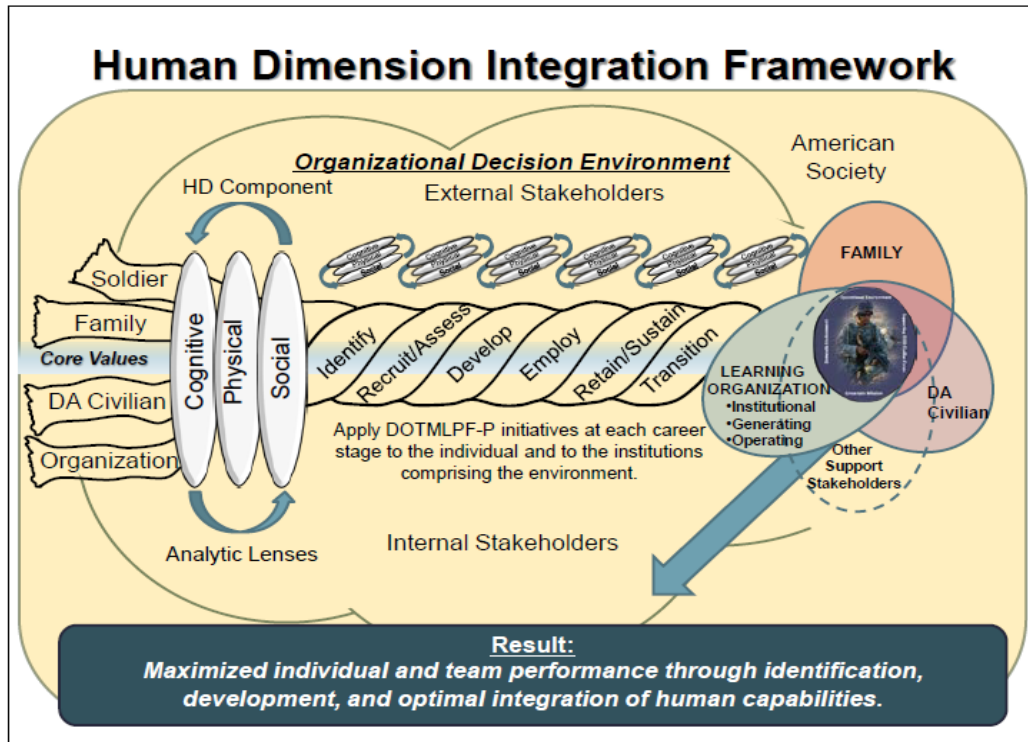


Figure 3. TRADOC human dimension framework

Source: (TRADOC PAM) 525-3-7 *The U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept* (Fort Eustis, VA: Government Printing Office, 2014), 11.

The use of the term human domain predates the current debates and was used in the 2005 DoD *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*. While it did not provide a definition for the term, the publication noted the cognitive, social, and moral aspects of the human domain and discussed the importance of “human reach” as a component of operational reach that is gained by “thoroughly understanding the adversary or other groups through various means.”²⁷ The term was not used again formally until the SLTF pursued it in earnest beginning in January 2013. The SLTF sought to institutionalize human considerations for military operations by introducing the

²⁷Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 12-16.

human domain as a sixth domain of warfare.²⁸ As presented, it spanned the four physical domains (air, land, maritime, and space) in much the same way as the cyber domain. Debates over establishing a new domain precluded a doctrinally accepted definition of the human domain. The most widely accepted definition of the term is the “totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior in a population-centric conflict.”²⁹

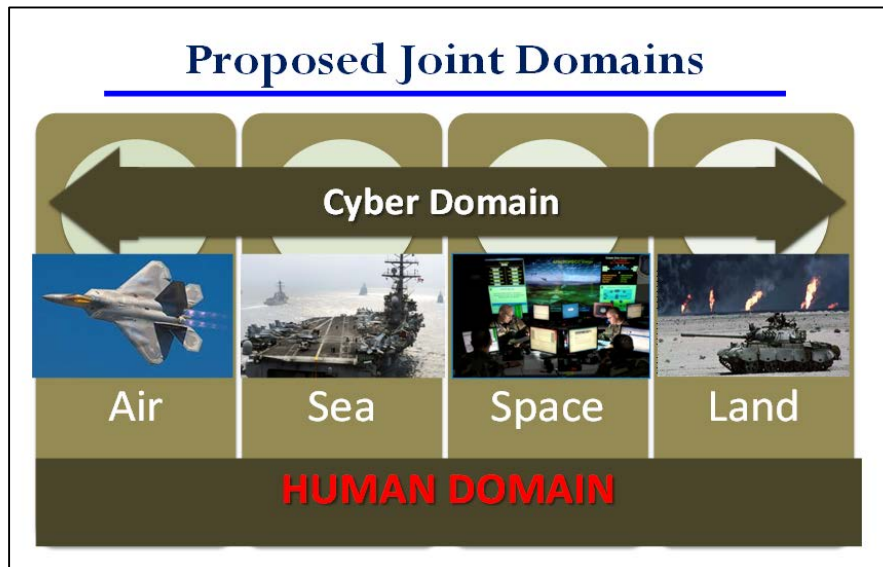


Figure 4. Conceptual depiction of the Human Domain as foundation for other domains

Source: Frank Hoffman and Michael C. Davies, “Joint Force 2020 and the Human Domain: Time for a New Conceptual Framework?” *Small Wars Journal* (June 10, 2013): 5.

²⁸For a discussion on the definition and concept of domain as applied to warfare and military operations, see Stephen Schnell, “Trust as a Currency: The Role of Relationships in the Human Domain,” monograph (School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2014), 6-17.

²⁹This definition is a direct quote from *United States Special Operations Command 2020: Forging the Tip of the Spear*. The definition is in print in several USSOCOM and US Army Special Operations Command documents and publications and largely influenced and impacted the verbiage of the *Strategic Landpower White Paper*, a document tri-signed by General Raymond Odierno (Chief of Staff of the US Army, General James Amos (Commandant of the US Marine Corps), and Admiral William McRaven (SOCOM Commander) on May 6, 2013. Though not specifically called the human domain, nearly identical language is used in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-05, *Special Operations* in defining necessary considerations for unified land operations.

As the leading proponent for the human domain, the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is seeking to operationalize the human domain concept. Supported by assertions of an increasingly complex and unpredictable future operating environment and a “growing importance of population dynamics,” USSOCOM argues for the addition of the human domain for several reasons: to better align ways, means, and ends; to ensure a focus on human factors, including decision-making and behavior, during planning, execution, and assessment; to emphasize the need for cross domain coordination; and to elevate the importance of influence activities.³⁰

Despite USSOCOM’s current proponency for the new domain, this concept has been supported within the Army from its inception. In his 2012 paper, “Human Domain: Essential to Victory in Future Operations,” then Major General Robert Brown asserted that not only is the human domain the center of gravity for success, but also that “dominating the human domain will continue to be the critical component for success and needs to be a major priority for investment... within the Department of Defense.”³¹ The term was also noted by the three signatories of the *Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills*, the senior military leaders of the US Army, US Marine Corps, and USSOCOM, with explicit objectives to explore the concept

³⁰Many documents and assessments attempt to describe the future operating environment. In this case, USSOCOM uses the CJCS *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* description as its foundation. See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-4. Also see USSOCOM, “Operating in the Human Domain,” pre-decisional draft dated September 5, 2014. In this document, USSOCOM cites the means to operationalizing the human domain as “the ability to apply the fundamentals of understanding and operating among people in the environment.”

³¹Robert B. Brown and Ronald W. Sprang, “Human Domain: Essential to Victory in Future Operations,” White Paper from Fort Benning, GA, US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, 2012. At the time, MG Brown was the Commanding General of the US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, the proponent for the US Army Infantry and Armor branches. This is significant because of the widespread distaste among the Armor and Infantry for stability and more population-centric operations. LTG Brown is currently the Commanding General of the US Army Combined Arms Center, charged with “preparing the Army and its leaders for war.”

further. The white paper stated, “In a word, the success of future strategic initiatives and the ability of the United States to shape a peaceful and prosperous global environment will rest more and more on our ability to understand, influence, or exercise control within the ‘human domain.’”³²

In 2014, the US Army suspended its efforts seeking the adoption of a new domain in joint doctrine, opting instead to include the concept as a component of military operations. The US Army Asymmetric Group began work to identify Human Aspects of Military Operations (HAMO), and by January 2015 had introduced to the DoD’s Joint Staff a draft Joint Concept for Human Aspects of Military Operations (JC-HAMO) in conjunction with USSOCOM. According to the draft, JC-HAMO “describes how the Joint Force understands, anticipates, and influences the decisions and associated behavior of relevant individuals, groups, and populations” and how the Joint Force “can use an understanding of HAMO to enhance stability, prevent and mitigate conflict, and, when necessary, fight and defeat adversaries.”³³ In contrast to the frequent service specific characterizations of the air, land and maritime domains, JC-HAMO makes a significant effort to build on existing approaches for the Joint Force as a whole, seeking to span the physical domains by emphasizing the human aspects involved with winning support and gaining advantage and influence among relevant actors or populations.³⁴ Similarly, as JC-HAMO seeks to identify and influence *all* relevant actors in the operational environment, military information support operations, public affairs, strategic communications, and defense support to public diplomacy are all elements to be considered and utilized under the JC-HAMO construct.³⁵ As of

³²Odierno, Amos, and McRaven, 5.

³³Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Human Aspects of Military Operations (JC-HAMO)*, Draft version 0.25, 16 January 2015, 3.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 1-2.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 12.

November 2014, the Joint Staff had also accepted a draft prospectus for a new “Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning” which seeks to define a more comprehensive approach to campaigning that starts with an understanding of HAMO.³⁶

The longstanding discussion about human factors in conflict stands in contrast to many examples of military operations and US policy decisions that point to a lack of understanding their importance. Perhaps the most studied recent American example is the Vietnam conflict. The Vietnam experience is a good point of reference because it not only demonstrates the initial misunderstanding of the human aspects, but also how the US government rapidly adapted as an organization.

In Search of the Human Domain in Vietnam

Critics have and will continue to discuss America’s failed situational understanding as it developed policy and strategy leading up to troop commitments in Vietnam. John Prados argued in 2009 that the United States acted within a narrowing range of potential options due to misunderstandings of the war’s reality as defined along political, military, foreign policy, social and economic dimensions. The misunderstanding began within the context of the spread of global communism and without understanding the Vietnamese anti-colonial revolution following World War II.³⁷ As years passed, successive developments and decisions impacted American options

³⁶Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Concept Prospectus: Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, Working Paper, November 2014, 1. The new JCIC and JC-HAMO were discussed during a January 16, 2015 panel discussion at the Center for Strategic International Studies in Washington, DC “Developed from the lessons learned over the past 12 years of conflict, the Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC) and the Human Aspects of Military Operations (HAMO) concepts are currently making the migration into joint development.” Accessed on February 8, 2015, <http://www.arcic.army.mil/Feeds/spotlight.aspx>.

³⁷John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 536-550. For a contrasting perspective, see Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Moyar argued that: American leaders correctly perceived the cooperation between China

and freedom of action. While many of those developments and decisions were likely the result of US domestic political considerations, they greatly impacted the decisions made for actions in the largely misunderstood operational environment of Vietnam.³⁸ In an analysis of the war, the authors of *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam* explained the consequences of such errors:

To enter, voluntarily, a political-military struggle without a sound knowledge of your enemy, your ally, or the true nature of the conflict is to invite repeated and costly escalations and possibly distortion and even ultimate frustration of your initial aims; in the painful process, from beginning to end, one's ally is likely to become unduly contorted and constrained by inappropriate advice and assistance.³⁹

After the conclusion of World War II and amidst the growing fears of globally spreading communism, the United States committed in 1950 to supporting the French in Indochina in hopes of stemming communism in the region. In his book, *Vietnam: A History*, Stanley Karnow discussed several of the early misgivings, essentially beginning with the “belief that Ho Chi Minh was a pawn of the communists more so than a nationalist committed to Vietnamese

and North Vietnam; South Vietnamese had little interest in fighting for nationalist causes; President Diem of South Vietnam was “in reality a very wise and effective leader”; and in contrast even to his own first book, that South Vietnam was a vital interest to the US Moyer argued the United States’ biggest mistake in South Vietnam was inciting the November 1963 coup that overthrew Diem and “forfeited the tremendous gains of the previous nine years.” Johnson was left to cope with the post-coup instability and weakness and by 1965 had to act strongly to defend South Vietnam from aggressive Chinese and North Vietnamese expansion. To Moyer, US leaders did not misunderstand the situation, they failed to implement aggressive policy options to defend South Vietnam.

³⁸See discussion of Daniel Ellsberg’s testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 13, 1970 in Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), 221. In an exchange with Committee Chairman Senator J. Williams Fulbright, Ellsberg testified: “since 1949 no American President has been willing to see the fall of Indochina added to the fall of China during his Administration...I believe that each President really has been willing to invest major resources to take considerable risks in order simply to postpone the fall of Saigon... [for] essentially political reasons.”

³⁹BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. II, *South Vietnam*, (McLean, VA: BDM Corporation, 1980), 7-64.

independence.”⁴⁰ Neil Sheehan, author of *Bright Shining Lie*, argued further that American leaders saw Ho Chi Minh’s forces as part of the growing threat of communism rather than as a nationalist movement using communism as a vehicle:

Anti-communism contributed to it [the Vietnam War] in the sense that because of their mindset, they [US leaders] wanted to see the world in black and white, they didn’t want to see any shades of gray, and so you got a simple minded anti-communism... totally incapable of realizing that yes, Ho Chi Minh is a communist, he’s not a democrat, he’s not an agrarian reformer, he kills his enemies; but he’s a nationalist... communist countries were destined to behave as differently from each other as right-wing dictatorships had. Our statesmen ignored that. They didn’t ever really consider that possibility. When the Sino-Soviet split occurred, they ignored it. Their instincts led them to look for simple minded solutions and they then followed those simple minded solutions.⁴¹

Though Ho Chi Minh clearly was a communist, later studies discussed his nationalist overtures and appeal to the Vietnamese people:

Nearly 80% of the population were ethnic Vietnamese who had a tradition of ethnic unity stemming from their long period of independence, the successful expansion southward... Ethnic identity was only translated into a spirit of nationalism—a very Western concept—with the coming of the French. It remained a powerful unifying force and source of nationalist vigor after the French left, and was recognized and exploited as such by the communists.⁴²

⁴⁰Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, rev.ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 59.

⁴¹Neil Sheehan, “Remembering the Vietnam War, Conversations with Neil Sheehan,” November 14, 1988, part of *Conversations with History*, University of California, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Sheehan/sheehan-con6.html>.

⁴²BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*, vol. II, *South Vietnam*, 1-11. Also see Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 81-103. Fall provides a detailed background of Ho Chi Minh’s association with communism dating from 1920 as a founding member of the French Communist Party. Also see George C. Herring, “America and Vietnam: The Unending War,” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 5 (Winter 1991/1992):106. Herring points out that, despite Ho’s intentions of establishing a Marxist-Leninist state, “it is equally clear” that Ho initiated and sustained much of the struggle for South Vietnam without support and direction from the USSR. Further, the “revolution grew in strength because it was able to identify with Vietnamese nationalism, and it had a dynamism of its own quite apart from international communism.

The miscalculations continued at the 1954 Geneva Conference to negotiate the end of the French war in Indochina: “[t]he conclusion at Geneva was to be misinterpreted, if not misunderstood, for years to come.”⁴³ The Conference settlement allowed for a temporary partition of Vietnam and the installation of a government under Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam pending a nationwide election in 1956, but Karnow posits even Diem’s mistake—“he saw their [Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh] uprising in narrow military terms—a misperception shared by his American patrons.”⁴⁴

Ho Chi Minh had sought American support for the Vietnamese nationalist revolution early on. Ho met with operatives from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, World War II precursor to the US Central Intelligence Agency) as early as 1945, and by 1947, he actively pursued support from the Truman administration.⁴⁵ His efforts were rebuffed because of misperceptions about Ho and the Vietnamese people. According to historian Mark Bradley, the American assumptions about Vietnamese capabilities for postcolonial independence were based on cultural and ideological differences and stereotyping. The Truman administration viewed the innate capabilities of the Vietnamese through a “prism of racialized cultural hierarchies” and considered them weak, susceptible to external influence in the emerging postcolonial era. The hierarchical view assumed that non-Westerners were inferior to Europeans and Americans, and

⁴³Karnow, 220.

⁴⁴Ibid., 229. For contemporary perspective, see Seth Jacobs, *America’s Miracle Man in Vietnam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). Jacobs argues that ideology and religion were driving factors behind American support for Diem, rather than traditional balance of power and “materialistic interpretations.”

⁴⁵Fall, 100-101. Lacking support from the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union, Ho made several contacts with the OSS in Southern China. The OSS reinforced Ho with several teams, and for a short time, there was at least a faint din of a “pro Western honeymoon—if, internally, it had ever actually existed.”

the limited political reporting on Vietnam at the time in the United States supported this view.⁴⁶ Lacking sufficient information, evidence, and analysis, the reporting was “based on racial prejudices and stereotypes that reflected deep-seated convictions about the superiority of Western culture.”⁴⁷ As a result, American policy towards Vietnam remained very conservative, eventually favoring a French installed regime and rebuffing Ho Chi Minh’s initiatives for closer political and economic ties. Isolated and in need of external support for his anticolonial struggle, Ho turned to the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong for assistance. That Mao and the Chinese Communist Party defeated Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalists in 1949 made this a viable alternative.

The Truman administration considered Vietnam critical in the growing fight to stem the tide of communism in Southeast Asia, but it found itself in a dilemma. American leadership did not want to support continued French colonialism in any way, but they also feared losing Vietnam to communism if they did not support the French or intervene themselves. Herring asserts “American officials viewed Ho and the Vietminh as instruments of the Soviet drive for world domination, directed and controlled by the Kremlin” from the outset, and that this view did not change until much later when the US military was engaged in full combat with the North Vietnamese.⁴⁸ Within the Truman administration, both the Secretaries of Defense (Louis Johnson) and State (Dean Acheson) explained the situation clearly: “the choice confronting the

⁴⁶Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), chap. 5, accessed January 7, 2015, ProQuest Ebrary. The Americans were also well aware that the French colonial officials had done little to train or educate the Vietnamese on how to govern or manage themselves.

⁴⁷George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 13.

⁴⁸Herring, “America and Vietnam: The Unending War,” 106.

United States is [either] to support the French in Indochina or to face the extension of communism over the remainder of the continental area of Southeast Asia and possibly farther westward.”⁴⁹ Truman chose the former option, and the Eisenhower administration continued the policy, firmly agreeing that Ho Chi Minh was an “instrument of international communism and that the fall of Indochina would cause the loss of all Southeast Asia with disastrous political, economic, and strategic consequences for the United States.”⁵⁰ Both administrations formalized their views on the strategic importance of Southeast Asia and articulated the policy of containment of communism in National Security Council (NSC) documents—NSC-68 (1950) and later NSC-162/2 (1953).⁵¹

The biased and racialized perceptions of a weak Vietnamese culture coupled with the fear of communist expansion lent to a conspiratorial theory that overshadowed the true nature of the conflict in Vietnam. A 1948 CIA assessment clearly linked the stereotyped weak Vietnamese and their resentment of colonial powers to the likelihood of Soviet subversion: “Thus the basic backwardness of these areas... make[s] them peculiarly susceptible to Soviet penetration.”⁵² But the US response to fears of communism was not merely a distaste for communism in general. Through the 1950s the United States provided support to Tito’s Nationalist Communist

⁴⁹Cited in Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of Joint History, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the First Indochina War 1947-1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 36.

⁵⁰Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 30.

⁵¹NSC 162/2 states: “Certain other countries, such as Indo-China or Formosa, are of such strategic importance to the United States that an attack on them probably would compel the United States to react with military force.” See NSC 162/2, “Basic National Security Policy,” October 30, 1953.

⁵²“ORE 25-48, The Breakup of the Colonial Empires and Its Implications for US Security, 3 September 1948” in *Estimative Products on Vietnam 1948-1975* (National Intelligence Council, 2005), 14.

movement in Yugoslavia for over a decade.⁵³ Instead, the United States feared losing Vietnam specifically to the subversive influences of Soviet or Chinese Communism. President John F. Kennedy's Ambassador to India, John K. Galbraith, later wrote, "To blunt the thrust of this [Soviet] empire we came militarily to the support of Ngo Diem Dihn and his successors."⁵⁴ Following the eventual French withdrawal after their defeat at Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Convention of 1954, the United States was committed to its anti-communism fight and had already rebuffed Ho Chi Minh. The remaining option was to support President Diem of the newly independent South Vietnam.

The US leadership failed to understand the nature of the conflict they were fighting in Vietnam, and therefore found it difficult to effectively counter the North Vietnamese. Vo Nguyen Giap, who as the North Vietnamese Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces for nearly thirty years from 1944-73, later commented about the Americans, "They can't get it into their heads that the Vietnam War has to be understood in terms of the strategy of a People's War, that it's not a problem of [numbers of] men and material, that these things are irrelevant to the problem."⁵⁵ Giap later told Stanley Karnow, "In war there are two factors—human beings and weapons. Ultimately, though, human beings are the decisive factor."⁵⁶ Philip

⁵³See Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

⁵⁴John Kenneth Galbraith, *How to Get Out of Vietnam: A Workable Solution to the Worst Problem of Our Time* (New York: New American Library, 1967), 13-17.

⁵⁵Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, ed. and trans. Russell Stetler (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 329-330. For analysis of American perceptions of Chinese Communist interests in Vietnam, see SNIE 10-62 "Communist Objectives, Capabilities, and Intentions in Southeast Asia, 21 February 1962" in *Estimative Products on Vietnam 1948-1975*, 173-177. The SNIE briefly discusses the differences between the Soviet and Chinese Communist views on tactics, priorities, and fundamental matters of ideology and policy. SNIE 10-62 also discusses China's aggressive support to "national liberation struggles" as a vehicle to achieve their objectives in Southeast Asia while minimizing risk of US intervention.

⁵⁶Karnow, 21.

Davidson argued the foremost aspect of the People's War, otherwise known as revolutionary war, is its political nature. By focusing instead on the military struggle, the United States organized, prioritized, and fought with secondary attention to population and the political, economic, and psychological effects of military operations.⁵⁷

While the US leadership may have misunderstood the enemy it faced in the form of Giap, Ho Chi Minh, and the Vietminh, it also never fully appreciated or understood its South Vietnamese ally. Robert Komer, presidential advisor to Lyndon Baynes Johnson, NSC staff member, and first director of CORDS, stated this problem implicitly:

In the last analysis, the US effort in Vietnam failed largely because it could not sufficiently revamp or adequately substitute for a South Vietnamese leadership, administration, and armed forces inadequate to the task...The failure to understand the capabilities and limitations of our ally in Vietnam is probably the single most important explanation of what went wrong with US policy there.⁵⁸

According to Komer, it was the American bureaucratic system and organizational behavior that impeded US actions, policies, and adaptability. Rather than undertaking the arduous process of learning the intricacies of South Vietnam's society, culture, and political history to help the South Vietnamese build an effective indigenous government responsive to the needs of its people, civilian agencies and military leaders tended to Americanize the situation and do what they knew best within the architecture of their own stove piped departmental system. The BDM Corporation's *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam* concluded, "By becoming totally wedded to US tactics and techniques, the RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces] were relatively helpless when deprived of the ways, means and experience which make the US system

⁵⁷Philip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946-1975* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Limited Publishers, 1988), 799-811.

⁵⁸Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 21-22.

effective.”⁵⁹ By Americanizing many aspects of South Vietnam’s responses to the war, the US effort in Vietnam did not prepare RVNAF leadership to plan, coordinate or fight large formations, especially without US firepower and mobility.

The misunderstandings about the nature of the conflict, the enemy, and our ally the RVN contributed to an ill-organized effort to achieve the US government objectives of an independent and communist free South Vietnam.⁶⁰ Aside from the conventional military fight by US Army and Marine Corps ‘big units’ and the US Air Force and Navy bombing campaigns, the program or strategy adopted by the US leaders and the government of South Vietnam to fight the “other war” was largely known as pacification.⁶¹ Pacification is especially pertinent to modern debates because, in its broadest terms, it was a strategy or concept by which to bring security and political and economic stability to an area.⁶² In contemporary terms, pacification was the population-centric concept of COIN.⁶³ In a study sanctioned by DoD and other US government agencies to

⁵⁹BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam: Omnibus Executive Summary*, II-15. RVNAF included the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), Regional Forces (RF), Popular Forces (PF), Navy, Air Force, the National Police and other local paramilitaries.

⁶⁰For a discussion on US objectives in South Vietnam as outlined by the Johnson Administration in National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 288, dated 17 March 1964, see Beacon Press, *The Senator Gravel Edition: The Pentagon Papers, The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, vol. III (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971), 50-51. Also see *The Pentagon Papers*, vol. I, 384-390.

⁶¹See Richard A. Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam’s Hearts and Minds* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 31. Hunt stated the pacification effort first became known as the “other war” in 1965 upon the arrival of the first combat troops to South Vietnam in 1965. It was a disparaging term that “stigmatized the program’s status as a noble but failing endeavor that was no longer the main effort.”

⁶²Thomas W. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, US Army, 1982), 3.

⁶³In American terms, pacification was generally used in the early 20th century to refer to American military operations in the Philippines. Post WWII, people generally spoke of counter-guerilla warfare until the analogue of the Philippines respective of Vietnam brought pacification back into use.

provide doctrinal and operational lessons from US involvement in Vietnam that might be used in “providing technical assistance and advice to other friendly governments facing internal security problems,” the Institute for Defense Analyses defined pacification as:

an array and combination of action programs designed to extend the presence and influence of the central government and to reduce the presence and influence of those who threaten the survival of the government through propaganda, terror, and subversion. The pacification process incorporates a mix of programs and activities that may vary in composition and relative emphasis from time to time and from place to place. But, in general, the program mix comprises two broad types of activities. These are designed, on the one hand, to establish and maintain a significant degree of physical security for the population and, on the other, to increase the communication and the ties between the government and the people through a variety of selected nonmilitary programs [security and development].⁶⁴

Despite the US armed forces’ experience with military governments or humanitarian efforts in previous conflicts (both World Wars and Korea), those types of operations were essentially branches or successive operations following major conventional fights, and not critical aspects of the major operational phases of the conflict. In contrast, Chester Cooper, a former CIA Southeast Asia analyst who served on the NSC staff, and others asserted that “if a well-conceived pacification program had been initiated and energetically implemented in Vietnam in the late 1950s, the hostilities there might never have reached the point that American combat troops were required to preserve the Saigon government.”⁶⁵ As noted in the definition above, pacification involved the two broad activities of security and development. These same activities are described in contemporary COIN doctrine, but in practice, there is often a classic debate over the application of security and development—which comes first?⁶⁶

⁶⁴Chester L. Cooper, Judith E. Corson, Laurence J. Legere, David E. Lockwood, and Donald M. Weller, *The American Experience with Pacification in Vietnam*, vol. I, *An Overview of Pacification* (Arlington, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 1972), 1.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 2. It could also be argued that the recent Chinese Communist victory in China’s own civil war had plenty of major combat operations at the end, potentially making large amounts of US and transferred Soviet equipment available that “might” be passed to the Vietminh.

⁶⁶For doctrinal discussion on security and development in COIN, see especially chapters

Cooper’s assertion above is a clear example of the dichotomy involved with pacification in a population-centric conflict. Had the American and South Vietnamese governments better understood the situation earlier, a concerted population-centric effort through political and economic means to counter the insurgent threat may have decreased or prevented the requirement for substantially increased military actions to protect the population. Rather than two parallel reinforcing efforts (securing the population to enable development, and development to bring allegiance and popular support for military success), the American government clearly favored the military, security-first solution through its demonstrated commitment of resources (money and manpower) to that end.⁶⁷ Davidson even stated that pacification “was a stepchild” in the war effort with the real emphasis on the big-unit war and Rolling Thunder.⁶⁸

This disjointedness is one of the most important recurring criticisms of the Vietnam conflict—the need for unity of effort. As noted in *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam*: “In countering a Revolutionary (People’s) War unity of effort is absolutely essential; that unity must include not only the indigenous inter/intragovernmental agencies but also those of any allies involved.”⁶⁹ In May 1967, President Johnson formally announced the beginning of

9 (“Direct Methods for Countering Insurgencies”) and 10 (“Indirect Methods for Countering Insurgencies”), Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014).

⁶⁷Scoville, 3-4.

⁶⁸Davidson, 800. Operation Rolling Thunder was the umbrella name for the American air campaign against North Vietnam from March 1965 until November 1968. One of the program’s stated objectives was to break the morale of the North Vietnamese leadership in Hanoi and compel them to end the insurgency in South Vietnam. Davidson describes in context Operation Rolling Thunder, with some of the controversial discussion points on pages 336-342. For a thorough analysis of Operation Rolling Thunder and the viability of Douhet and Mitchell’s air power theories, see John T. Smith, *Rolling Thunder: The American Strategic Bombing Campaign Against North Vietnam 1964-68* (Surrey, Great Britain: Air Research Publications, 1994).

⁶⁹BDM Corporation, *A Study of Strategic Lessons Learned in Vietnam: Omnibus Executive Summary*, VI-29.

an organization designed to bring focus to pacification and unity of effort to the conflict in Vietnam—Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support or CORDS.

Though CORDS was not established until 1967, pacification in South Vietnam proper began with its independence in 1954 after the Geneva Conference.⁷⁰ Diem's fledgling government of South Vietnam rightly realized that they only controlled the South's large cities and exerted no control or governance to the local villages where most of the population lived. To extend his rule, Diem directed his Minister of Defense to gain control of the rural areas and granted him control of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, police forces, and public administrators to implement the directive. This effort was commonly known as pacification to the Americans who had already been associated with such efforts alongside the French prior to 1954. Though the French themselves had centralized control of Vietnam under bureaucratic rule and undermined the traditional autonomy of the villages during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they failed to provide any opportunity for the Vietnamese to manage and govern themselves. Upon the French departure in 1954, the Vietnamese were politically, economically, militarily, and administratively unprepared for independence.⁷¹

⁷⁰See Tran Dinh Tho, *Pacification* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1980). Brigadier General Tho, Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations under Lieutenant General Dong Van Khuyen, Chief of Staff and Commanding General of the Central Logistics Command, RVNAF, and General Cao Van Vien, Chairman of the Joint General Staff during pacification planning and coordination at the Government of Vietnam level. While the exact years of Tho's service as the J3 of the Joint General Staff is unknown, it clearly began after General Cao became the Chairman in October 1965. Tho's personal account of pacification, as a self-described architect of the blueprint for pacification, only briefly addresses pacification efforts before the Strategic Hamlet Program, citing the efforts of Father Hoa, a Catholic priest of Chinese origin who fled North Vietnam to the South in 1954. Tho stated that "the most significant communist opposition to pacification dated back to the early days" of the Strategic Hamlet Program and even notes that the "war in Vietnam was a continuation of the basic conflict, begun in 1946." His account really focuses on the new strategy for pacification, "Pacification and Development," under Premier Nguyen Cao Ky after 1965.

⁷¹Hunt, *Pacification*, 8-12.

President Diem, with varying levels of US support, continued modest attempts to wrest control and support of the rural South Vietnamese countryside until his assassination in November 1963. The Civic Action Plan (1955-56) met initial success as it enlisted teachers, health care workers and others from Saigon into small cadre teams to provide relief to rural settlements. When the program morphed into civil servants working, eating, and living with peasants, it met growing resistance from the government workers and eventually failed. The Agrovillage Program (1957-1961) suffered a similar fate when it lost sight of its original objectives during implementation. Diem envisioned agrovillages as strong rural settlements with schools, medical facilities, and other social services. Built by relocated peasants, agrovillages would extend the government's authority and provide protection from the growing Viet Cong (VC) insurgency. It failed under the bane of discontented and unrecompensed peasant laborers that continued to suffer from VC attacks. Finally, the Strategic Hamlet Program (1961-1963) focused on building security first in the form of fortified hamlets. With local defense forces in the hamlets and nearby quick reaction forces, the hamlets could ward off guerrilla raids and attacks. Under this protective umbrella, the government would work to involve the people and improve social and living conditions. While again forcing the peasants into unfavorable conditions and restrictions, the program failed to satisfy the needs of the peasantry. According to South Vietnamese Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, several political upheavals, namely the overthrow of President Diem, "slowed the accomplishment of the objectives of the Strategic Hamlet program and eventually terminated it altogether."⁷² In one example, only 30 of 219 strategic hamlets in Long An province remained under government control by July 1964.⁷³

⁷²Tho, 14-15.

⁷³Ibid., 20-25. Also see Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

Diem's pacification programs failed because his Saigon regime failed to deliver to the needs of the peasantry. Compounding that failure, the programs were not synched with other military efforts to secure the population. Cooper later commented on the importance of understanding the internal local dynamics:

a decision to undertake a pacification program must be approached with caution and, aside from careful weighing of the military and political national interest, with as full a knowledge as possible of the internal factors affecting the likelihood of success, and with keen attention to achieving those preconditions of understanding and commitment which would increase the probability of success.⁷⁴

Ultimately, Diem's regime could not win the support of the people.

After Diem's overthrow and amidst numerous additional coups, Saigon's ability to support the populace and its very legitimacy were suspect. Amidst reports of increasing infiltration from the North, the first regular North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units already appearing in battles in the South, and signs of an organizing NVA conventional offensive, American senior leaders in Vietnam petitioned the Johnson Administration to take more action to help the South.⁷⁵ According to US Ambassador to South Vietnam (and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) Maxwell Taylor, the "counterinsurgency program country-wide is bogged down and will require heroic treatment to assure revival... This deterioration of the pacification program has taken place in spite of the very heavy losses inflicted almost daily on the Viet-Cong" and the VC have "made good their losses."⁷⁶ As Johnson's Ambassador, Taylor was responsible for coordinating all US government actions in South Vietnam and providing situational assessments and policy recommendations to the administration in Washington. The American leadership saw the need for reform and increased support to the South Vietnamese government.

⁷⁴Cooper, xviii.

⁷⁵Hunt, *Pacification*, 28-30.

⁷⁶David M. Barrett, ed., *Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam Papers: A Documentary Collection* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 90.

The years 1964-65 were full of turmoil following Diem's overthrow and highlighted the need for reorganized civil-military efforts in South Vietnam. The most significant factors were: the expanding war, including increasing numbers of North Vietnamese (VC and NVA), US and South Vietnamese units; weakness and instability of the Saigon government; growing commitment of US resources; and the South Vietnamese development of the Ministry of Rural Construction (later changed to Revolutionary Development) to manage pacification. However, it was not until the Honolulu Conference of February 1966 that significant organizational change was accepted. Throughout 1965 with the ineffectual bombing campaigns and the introduction of combat troops causing increased concerns over possible Chinese intervention, the Johnson Administration realized that military measures alone would not win the war. Johnson approached the Honolulu Conference with a renewed consciousness of the South Vietnamese population—about the importance of political, social, and economic matters and pacification as a means to carry out improvements in each of these areas.⁷⁷

Despite significant opposition from the various civilian agencies of the US government, President Johnson unified responsibility for pacification in South Vietnam under the military in May 1967.⁷⁸ President Johnson appointed Robert W. Komer, one of his presidential assistants, to lead CORDS as General William Westmoreland's (Commander in Chief, Military Assistance Command—Vietnam or MACV) first Deputy for Pacification. That responsibility for both civil

⁷⁷Scoville, 17-24. The Honolulu Conference was called by President Johnson, and included the heads of the South Vietnamese government (Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Nguyen Cao Ky) as well as US Secretaries of Agriculture and Health, Education, and Welfare (and others including Secretary of State, US Ambassador to South Vietnam, etc.) See David C. Humphrey, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68*, vol. IV, *Vietnam 1966* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1998), 215-16, 246-55.

⁷⁸Ibid., 31-55.

and military support for pacification now belonged to General Westmoreland was explicit in the appointment and reorganization.⁷⁹

After the Honolulu Conference and before his deployment to Vietnam in 1967, Komer led the Washington effort to reinvigorate US support to pacification. In his analysis, he stressed the need for a mass effort simultaneously across the country instead of small hamlets or priority areas. He saw the military (US and South Vietnamese) as the only organization large enough to resource and manage such an endeavor. His position was controversial, but aimed merely at achieving a unity of effort beyond that of mundane interorganization ‘coordination’ rather than a military primacy. Komer even commented to Defense Secretary McNamara that he deemed the program more as a “means of bringing the military fully into the pacification process rather than putting civilians under the military.”⁸⁰ In fact, Komer, as a deputy commander in MACV, effectively overcame the subjugation of a political advisor or coordinator and essentially became a component commander. According to Thomas Scoville, US Army Center of Military History and CORDS member from 1967-68, “CORDS was unique in that for the first time in the history of the United States, civilians in a wartime field organization commanded military personnel and resources.”⁸¹ In the end, by placing

the disjointed and ineffective civilian pacification programs under the military...CORDS gave the pacification effort access to military money and personnel, allowing programs to expand dramatically. In 1966 there were about 1,000 advisers involved in pacification, and the annual budget was \$582 million; by 1969 that had risen to 7,600 advisers and

⁷⁹President Lyndon B. Johnson, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 362, “Responsibility for US Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development)”, LBJ Library Archives, 9 May 1967, accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/NSAMs/nsam362.asp>.

⁸⁰Scoville, 36.

⁸¹Ibid., v. See also pages 60-66. As a presidentially appointed ambassador and Westmoreland’s Deputy for Pacification, he turned CORDS into an operating agency with command authority. This was clarified before the final issuance of NSAM 362 as control of advisors and not military units.

almost \$1.5 billion. This rapid progress was possible only because of CORDS's streamlined system under Defense Department control.⁸²

The American reorganization for pacification support was significant, but US military and civilian officials alike agreed that pacification was still a South Vietnamese program, advised and supported by the United States. The Saigon government made the policy decisions to guide the pacification program and the South Vietnamese political officials, military, and police forces administered and executed its implementation. Richard Hunt, a US Army captain in MACV and historian with the US Army Center of Military History, later wrote “It was up to the South Vietnamese to develop the political institutions and provide the local security—police, paramilitary forces, and militia—that would enable the government to consolidate its hold on the villages rather than merely to station its official in them.”⁸³ To manage support for pacification, Komer and Westmoreland would maintain very close ties with the applicable ministries of the South Vietnamese government. As the vehicle for unified management of all the diffuse US pacification programs, CORDS would provide tailored advice at each level to counterparts within the South Vietnamese government, and stimulate a major reform and resurgence of pacification efforts by the Saigon regime. Unfortunately, an analysis from the Department of State (DoS) forecasted that Army of the Republic of Vietnam’s persistent orientation on the conventional war (reflecting US forces’ inclinations and fighting techniques) would likely undermine the pacification effort, especially given its demonstrated weakness in basic conventional fights. The “under-manned and inadequately trained” paramilitary forces were not doing much better.⁸⁴

⁸²Dale Andrade, “Three Lessons from Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 2005, accessed January 20 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/28/AR2005122801144.html>.

⁸³Richard A. Hunt, “Strategies at War: Pacification and Attrition in Vietnam” in *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts*, ed. Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 31.

⁸⁴*United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: Study Proposal by the Department of*

Komer immediately set CORDS on a path with clear priorities and tasks. Always remembering that CORDS's "raison d'être was to get the South Vietnamese to improve the pacification program," he consolidated all the former but viable disparate and distinct military and civilian projects into six CORDS programs: New Life Development which provided economic aid to villages; Chieu Hoi ("Open Arms") which encouraged VC to defect; Revolutionary Development Cadre which encouraged good governance programs at the local level; Refugee Support which helped refugees relocate; Psychological Operations which supported the Chieu Hoi program as well as other anti VC campaigns; and Public Safety, focused on increasing the size and capabilities of the National Police Force.⁸⁵ Persuading the flawed Saigon government to actually carry out these programs proved difficult, and Komer privately expressed his doubts about the South Vietnamese ability to overcome their own "seeming ingrained handicaps."⁸⁶

Though the South Vietnamese government eventually disintegrated and surrendered to the North Vietnamese in 1975, the US government did have some important successes with pacification. Without the ability to forecast what lie ahead, Komer concluded in his 1970 appraisal of CORDS and pacification that the strategy "stimulated what amounts to a rural revolution in Vietnam—politically, socially, and economically."⁸⁷ Dale Andrade of the US Army

Defense (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971) (commonly referred to as the *Pentagon Papers*), IV.C.6(b), 13-18.

⁸⁵Hunt, *Pacification*, 121, and Jeremy Patrick White, "Civil Affairs in Vietnam," publication paper for Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 28, 2009, accessed January 15, 2015 at <http://csis.org/publication/civil-affairs-vietnam>, 5.

⁸⁶Komer, 121-131. Another of Komer's main arguments is that US imposed constraints on its own dealings with Saigon limited the degree of leverage he and other US officials had in garnering support for new or increased pacification efforts. US administrations were concerned with the colonialist stigma associated with intervention in South Vietnamese internal affairs.

⁸⁷Robert W. Komer, *Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1970), 19.

Center of Military History argued in 2005 that “Saigon’s ultimate collapse was due to factors beyond the scope of counterinsurgency—North Vietnam’s large army and Washington’s decision to allow its sanctuaries outside South Vietnam’s borders were pivotal—but the communist insurgency was badly hurt by pacification.”⁸⁸ Pacification under CORDS arguably represented the best organized American effort of the Vietnam War to address the physical, social, and cultural elements of the human domain once those aspects were fully appreciated within the context of the whole conflict.

As the first Deputy to the Commander, MACV for CORDS, or DepCORDS, Komer offered a sound perspective of some of the organization’s successes and failures. His successor and later Director of Central Intelligence at the Central Intelligence Agency, William Colby shared many of the same reflections. CORDS’s foremost success was at unifying the disparate military and civilian pacification programs under a single manager with a single mission and a single chain of command within the theater military structure. A telling sign of the increased unity and coordination was the elimination of the term “other war” from official vocabulary. Komer’s influence with President Johnson’s overt support resulted in streamlined processes that eliminated multiple, stove piped channels from Vietnam back to Washington. Komer and the CORDS staff also unified direct communication with all levels of the South Vietnamese government.⁸⁹ CORDS’s unity of effort for pacification was a unique example of interagency coordination in the American Vietnam experience, but its success was not replicated in other areas.⁹⁰ More importantly, as only one of five staff directorates under MACV, CORDS did not

⁸⁸Andrade, “Three Lessons from Vietnam.”

⁸⁹Scoville, 75-80.

⁹⁰Komer, *Bureaucracy At War*, 81-110. Also see Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America’s Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1999). Though Komer found limited examples of unity of effort successes in other areas of the conflict, Sorley argued that the Vietnam War after Tet in 1968 has received relatively

achieve a level of service integration that fully synchronized the pacification effort with other military operations to achieve local security.⁹¹

With regards to security versus development, a lesson from Komer and CORDS is clear: security is key for successful development. According to former senior CORDS administrator John Paul Vann, “Whether security is ten percent of the total problem or ninety percent, it is inescapably the *first* ten percent or the *first* ninety percent.”⁹² Without security, neither US or host nation entities can effectively implement development programs. As Shultz demonstrated in his quantitative and qualitative analysis for *Lessons from an Unconventional War*, attempts to establish security and development programs concurrently were largely unsuccessful—“if an area remained contested, improving socioeconomic conditions through large amounts of aid and land reform did not significantly affect the establishment of security.”⁹³ CORDS was very effective at supporting the growth of security forces. Prior to CORDS, the territorial militias were poorly equipped and numbered only about 300,000. By the end of 1969, they were better equipped and trained, and numbered approximately 470,000. Similar growth was evident in the police force and the development cadre.⁹⁴

little consideration and that there was much success to speak of—“in the process came very close to achieving the elusive goal of a viable nation and a lasting peace.”

⁹¹Scoville, 81-82 and Richard Weitz, “CORDS and the Whole of Government Approach,” *Small Wars Journal* 6, no. 1 (February 4, 2010): 1-9, accessed January 26, 2015, http://www.cnas.org/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/RichardWeitz_SWJ.pdf.

⁹²Cited in Ronald H. Specter, *After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1993), 283.

⁹³Richard Shultz, Jr., “The Vietnamization-Pacification Strategy of 1969-1972: A Quantitative and Qualitative Reassessment,” in *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts* ed. Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 105.

⁹⁴Hunt, *Pacification*, 275. Hunt recognizes that quantitative growth or amounts of expenditure are not necessarily indicative of success and that the RVNAF still had many shortcomings and corruption. However, he uses the numbers to demonstrate CORDS effectiveness at pooling resources under a unified purpose to support South Vietnamese

CORDS's singular voice improved American influence with the South Vietnamese and in turn improved Saigon's support and emphasis on pacification. Under continuous pressure from Komer and Colby, President Thieu's (1967-75) initial antipathy for pacification changed. Instead of CORDS advisors at various levels of the government trying to persuade their counterparts, Thieu adopted the program into his political strategy, became invested as an active proponent, and issued directives to the provinces and districts. This also led to eventual reorganization of the South Vietnamese pacification structure at all levels, including the creation of a Deputy Prime Minister for Pacification and a ministerial-level Central Pacification Council. In 1969, Thieu himself assumed the chairmanship of the Central Council.⁹⁵ CORDS also influenced the removal of corrupt or ineffective officials. Though this often helped to improve local efficiency, the fact that many officials were simply relocated was an indicator of limited American influence and the South Vietnamese cultural proclivity for loyalty over competence.⁹⁶

Komer was also critical of CORDS and recognized its weaknesses and flaws. Related to the problem of limited US influence or leverage, the greatest weakness of the advisory effort under CORDS was that it did not go far enough in requiring the South Vietnamese government or its armed forces to improve. By limiting its leverage through self-imposed restraints, CORDS relied on persuasion over pressure to force South Vietnamese ownership of pacification and to avoid any semblance of reinstating colonial dominion. Without the ability to pressure better performance, American advisors became oriented on technical assistance and succumbed to its own results-oriented processes. Richard Hunt reinforced the criticism, noting that reports of inflated program evaluations and hollow projects risked turning pacification into a mechanical

pacification programs.

⁹⁵Komer, *Bureaucracy At War*, 120.

⁹⁶Hunt, *Pacification*, 275-277.

collection of bureaucratic programs, ultimately preventing American leaders “from recognizing the intractable nature of South Vietnam’s political, social, and military problems.”⁹⁷

Looking to the future, CORDS demonstrated that even with an organized American effort, understanding the human situation is still paramount to developing any solution, while flexibility to recognize and adapt to changing circumstances is crucial during implementation. A CORDS-like interagency framework may be necessary, but also may not be sufficient. The host country must have a reasonable amount of political legitimacy and capability. There must also be a populace willing to accept a US-supported government.⁹⁸ To reasonably assess the capability and legitimacy of the indigenous government and the willingness of its people requires an understanding of the human domain in the operational environment. General Creighton Abrams, Westmoreland’s successor as Commander, MACV, said at one point while in command, “It’s human relations. It’s a respect for the Vietnamese. It’s a sensitivity to humans.”⁹⁹ In Komer’s final points of *Bureaucracy at War*, he noted the flexibility of CORDS in its “qualified success”:

in strong contrast to the sheer conventionality of most aspects of the GVN/US response, it did eventually prove possible to set up and carry out a major GVN/US wartime program specifically designed to meet many of the atypical problems of people’s war in South Vietnam. Of all large scale US-supported efforts mounted during the Vietnam conflict, it stands out as perhaps the one most precisely tailored to the need.¹⁰⁰

CORDS was designed to support pacification in Vietnam. The objective of pacification was to build popular support for the South Vietnamese government by extending its own influence and reducing the enemy’s presence and influence. As a result, pacification support demanded both an in depth understanding of the human domain and a unified effort that could assist the South

⁹⁷Ibid., 279.

⁹⁸Mandy Honn, Farrah Meisel, Jacleen Mowery, and Jennifer Smolin, “A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS,” *Interagency Journal* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 42.

⁹⁹Lewis Sorley, ed., *Vietnam Chronicles: The Abrams Tapes 1968-1972* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2004), 325.

¹⁰⁰Komer, *Bureaucracy At War*, 121.

Vietnamese government to counter the enemy while also building popular support. Despite the ultimate failure of the South Vietnamese government to win over its people, CORDS provided an example of an organizational structure that unified many disparate elements of the American national security and interagency apparatus to support pacification with relative success. While a valid understanding of the situation was certainly a prerequisite to building a purpose-built organization, an appropriate organizational structure was also key to maintaining an awareness and understanding of the changing situation, while maintaining flexibility and authority to adapt. CORDS facilitated communication at all levels and ensured a singular focus by the interagency elements in support of pacification.

Learning All Over Again—Operation Iraqi Freedom

It is a dangerous endeavor to reason and draw conclusions by historical analogy because rarely are two situations in history exactly alike in either manifestation or interpretation.¹⁰¹ However, a preliminary examination of the second American-led war against Iraq (2003-2011) does provide some common ground for learning with America's Vietnam experience.¹⁰² Like Vietnam, American leaders sought to establish and sustain an indigenous Iraqi government that was acceptable to the United States and was popular enough for the Iraqi people to support and defend. After the US-led invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government, the

¹⁰¹For a case study comparison on the use of historical analogies in US policy making, see Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). For a study on the use of analogies to affect analysis and judgment, see Diederik A. Stapel and Russell Spears, "Guilty by Disassociation (And Innocent by Association): The Impact of Relevant and Irrelevant Analogies on Political Judgments," *Political Behavior* 18, no. 3 (Sep 1996), 289-309.

¹⁰²Also see Andrew Krepinevich, "Vietnam and Iraq: Why Everything Old Isn't New Again," transcript of presentation given on August 10, 2006 at the Combat Studies Institute 2006 Military History Symposium, Fort Leavenworth, KS, in Kendall D. Gott, ed., *Security Assistance: U.S. and International Historical Perspectives* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 647-666.

Iraq War quickly became a war for the people much like the People's War described by Giap in Vietnam. A series of miscalculations based on a flawed understanding of the human domain in Iraq led to an extended effort in Iraq far beyond initial estimates. In his 2004 *Foreign Affairs* article, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," Larry Diamond wrote:

Iraq today falls far short of what the Bush administration promised. As a result of a long chain of US miscalculations, the coalition occupation has left Iraq in far worse shape than it need have...US officials did get a number of things right, but they never understood—or even listened to—the country they were seeking to rebuild.¹⁰³

Additionally, the organizational structures in Washington and Iraq were inadequate to facilitate understanding the situation or unifying the effort to achieve declared objectives.

As discussed earlier, there were many lessons to be learned from the American experience in Vietnam despite the ultimate loss of South Vietnam to communism in 1975, and many students of the experiences would benefit from the adage that there is simply often more to learn from failure than success. Unfortunately, many critics often reference a litany of lessons summarized in the phrase "Vietnam Syndrome" or "No More Vietnams," and point to one of the war's foremost critics, Harry Summers, and his *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*. Such critics point to the lack of public support for unpopular military interventions in distant lands with little to no interest to American national security. The so-called fix manifested itself in a technologically advanced, all-volunteer professional military buttressed by the principles of the Powell-Weinberger Doctrine. The doctrine articulated the military's resistance to low-intensity

¹⁰³Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 2004): 34-56, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/214294281?accountid=28992>. For similar critiques see Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: the American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007); and Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006).

conflict and limited objectives unless conditions existed to allow for a near-certain successful outcome: popular support to advance or defend vital national interests, overwhelming force, and a definitive exit strategy. In effect, the military asserted that it would only fight the wars it was trained to fight and that it wanted to fight.¹⁰⁴

After nearly fifteen years of disillusionment, President George H.W. Bush declared to the world following the Gulf War of 1991 that “By God we’ve kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all.”¹⁰⁵ The message clearly pointed to the demonstrated superiority of the military and the results it could achieve on a conventional battlefield—decisive, quick to victory, minimal loss of American lives, and political popularity. The same enthusiasm revealed itself in the recourse to military intervention in Kosovo in 1999, with a veiled validation of air power and no loss of American lives.¹⁰⁶ In the days following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration wrongly applied this same self-assurance and confidence to the situations in both Iraq and Afghanistan where military superiority could control the battlefield but not the “endgame of conflict which depends on winning the allegiance of the territorial population.”¹⁰⁷ Whether intentional or not, the “Mission Accomplished” banner above George W. Bush on the deck of the USS *Abraham*

¹⁰⁴Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 268-271. Also see Bolger interview by Charlie Rose.

¹⁰⁵George H.W. Bush, “Remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council,” March 1, 1991, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19351>.

¹⁰⁶One might also argue that Rumsfeld, as Secretary of Defense after the American withdrawal from Vietnam (1975-1977), had come to his own lessons learned about protracted conflict that essentially prefigured Powell-Weinberger. The messiness of Somalia and the Balkans of the mid to late 1990s and the ‘effectiveness’ of ‘shock and awe’ may have confirmed his own bias. Another consideration was the possible need for the US military to demonstrate a certain effectiveness that did not require the long build up of Operation Desert Shield that preceded Desert Storm. In demonstration there could be greater deterrence of other potential foes.

¹⁰⁷Richard Falk, “The Iraq War: 10 Years Later,” *Foreign Policy Journal*, March 18, 2013, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2013/03/18/the-iraq-war-10-years-later/>.

Lincoln on May 1, 2003 symbolized to later critics the Bush administration's overall misunderstanding of the war that really had just begun, regardless of any possible ulterior motives.

The Vietnam Syndrome may be reinvigorated, if only in the consideration of how it contributed to the grave miscalculations of the situation prior to and during the early years of OIF. The George W. Bush administration largely ignored available expertise, and planned to fight a quick conventional war with limited but technologically overwhelming resources and firepower. In 2002, the DoS assembled the Future of Iraq Project to help plan for a post-Saddam Iraq. Composed of State Department Middle East experts, economists, interagency observers, and recently exiled Iraqi technocrats, the project convened working groups on justice, finance, physical infrastructure, social development, and cultural preservation, and provided reports to the Bush administration to assist with the nation building effort.¹⁰⁸ However, acting in accordance with President Bush's National Security Directive 24 (NSD-24), the DoD assumed control of the project at the Pentagon under the leadership of retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner and the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). According to Garner, Secretary

¹⁰⁸Department of State, "The Future of Iraq Project Overview," June 17, 2005 accessed February 2, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB198/FOI%20Overview.pdf>, Tab A, slides 2-8. Also see Richard N. Haas, Department of State, "Reconstruction in Iraq—Lessons of the Past," information memorandum, September 26, 2002. Haas, as the DoS Director of Policy Planning, submitted this memo separate from the Future Iraq Project. The memo proves in hindsight to be strikingly predictive of the situation the United States would face in Iraq. Among many valid points for consideration, the memo specifically states: "the start point for any reconstruction effort is an assessment of the nature of the problem we propose to tackle"; "once we cross the Rubicon by entering Iraq and ousting Saddam... the likelihood of a more ambitious post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq will increase correspondingly"; "the effective and rapid demobilization or co-opting of indigenous armed forces, militias, and internal security apparatus is critical"; "there is no such thing as a clean slate... success often requires compromise with individuals associated with the previous regime... not throwing out potentially stabilizing elements of the former regime."

of Defense Rumsfeld directed him to “shelve” the Future of Iraq Project and much of its completed work.¹⁰⁹

Disregarding the Future Iraq Project, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) staffed its nation building effort with a small group of individuals with limited experience or area expertise. The group accepted the premise the Iraqi people would hail the coalition as heroes, support the transition to a government largely coming from Iraqi exiles, and the nation building tasks could be quickly transferred to the new government. The group proceeded to focus on humanitarian efforts that could be accomplished quickly (but never materialized) while the coalition rapidly reduced and redeployed following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that unexpectedly transitioned with the ORHA in early May 2003, announced in Baghdad, “Guys, in a nutshell...the problem is that we planned for the wrong contingency” and the DoD had falsely assumed that most of the Iraqi Army would surrender as a whole, making them available for reconstruction under new leadership.¹¹⁰ This thought process reflected a resurgent Vietnam Syndrome given voice in the Powell-Weinberger doctrine and enabled the military to focus conventionally rather than on the complexities of nation building in a prolonged military commitment.¹¹¹

In her chapter titled “Strategic Counterinsurgency” about state-building in Iraq and Afghanistan, Linda Robinson asserted that the five most important American errors actually came after the start of the war from 2003 to 2007. Though the decisions each affected one or more of

¹⁰⁹Robert K. Brigham, *Is Iraq Another Vietnam?* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 71. NSD-24 (Post-War Iraq Reconstruction, January 20, 2003) remains classified but established ORHA and assigned responsibility for post-war Iraq planning to US Central Command.

¹¹⁰L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 26.

¹¹¹Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 497-501.

the physical domains, they all directly related to the physical, social, or cultural elements of the human domain and fueled the growing insurgency. The critical errors were: dissolution of the Iraqi Security Forces and de-ba'athification; holding initial elections to implement an indigenous government despite the Sunni boycott; writing a constitution largely based on principles drawn from Shia Islam; continually underestimating the Shia extremists; and finally, alienating the Sunni population through indiscriminate targeting and clearing operations. Though largely political, these decisions illustrated a fundamental misunderstanding of their impact.¹¹²

W. Andrew Terrill argued in *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba'athification Program* that the combined dissolution of the Iraqi Army and the Ba'ath Party were crippling to Iraqi society but largely unnecessary.¹¹³ Because the rank and file of the Army were subjected to the same ideological brutality of the Saddam loyalists that comprised much of the senior Iraqi Army leadership, they were widely regarded as a pillar of Iraqi society. The de-Ba'athification order was more sensible and supportable as the senior leaders of the army could have been removed with the dissolution of the Ba'ath Party. A restructured army with a purged leadership would likely have proven more acceptable to the Iraqi people and could have prevented the security

¹¹²Linda Robinson, "Strategic Counterinsurgency," in *U.S. Policy in Afghanistan and Iraq: Lessons and Legacies*, eds. Seyom Brown and Robert H. Scales (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2012), 113-120.

¹¹³See Bremer, 36-60 for Ambassador Bremer's argument and reasoning for CPA Orders Number 1, "DeBa'athification of Iraqi Society," and Number 2, "Dissolution of Entities." Bremer argues that with the orders, he was only removing "full members" of the Ba'ath Party at the top layers of the government ministries, and civil institutions, and that he was, in fact, leaving much of the civil infrastructure in place despite a willingness to accept "temporary inefficiency in the administration of the government" (41, 45). Further, the "old Army had long since disappeared" by the time Bremer arrived in Baghdad on May 12, 2003, and the dissolution of forces was necessary as a prelude to establishing Iraq's new security services and destroying the underpinnings of the Saddam regime (53). "Doing so would not send home a single soldier or disband a single unit... But it would formally dismantle the old power structure and signal that the fall of Saddam and the Ba'athists was permanent." (57).

vacuum following the orders. The orders continued from the belief that the Iraqi people would hail the coalition liberators and that there was little social or political base for resistance.¹¹⁴

The remainder of errors cited by Robinson demonstrate a fateful misunderstanding of the multi-dimensional Iraqi society, culture, history and political framework. In his essay “War and Resistance in Iraq,” Toby Dodge called it “an acute lack of knowledge about the country” that made it seem normal for the new authorities to take residence in the former seat of government with a small group of long-exiled elites.¹¹⁵ Much of this resulted from an unwillingness to engage and involve the Iraqis and fueled the perception of an American-led occupation and added to the emergence of an anti-American resistance. In order to build an acceptable, pro-US Iraqi government, Bremer shared only limited powers with the Iraqi-led transitional authority and touted the newly appointed Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) as the most representative governing body in Iraq’s history. In reality, the IGC reflected the religious and ethnic sectarian divisions among Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds in an unfamiliar political structure. Some older Iraqis even likened the ‘new’ process by which the IGC would nominate a national assembly to the strong, unfavorable memories of the period of British colonialism (1921-32) with no real Iraqi representation.¹¹⁶ Subject to the authority of the CPA, the IGC “had little standing with Iraqis, who saw it as an extension of the US government...as traitors and collaborators...distant and incomprehensible to most Iraqis.” Over the next fourteen months until the CPA transferred

¹¹⁴W. Andrew Terrill, *Lessons of the Iraqi De-Ba’athification Program for Iraq’s Future and the Arab Revolutions* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012), 35-42.

¹¹⁵Toby Dodge, “War and Resistance in Iraq: From Regime Change to Collapsed State,” in *The Iraq War: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Rick Fawn and Raymond Hinnebusch (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 211-223.

¹¹⁶David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2005), 180.

sovereignty to the Iraqi interim government, the CPA and the transitioning Iraqi government fumbled over election processes and the drafting of the Iraqi Constitution. Unfortunately, this alienated most elements of the population, including the Shia Arabs and clerics, the Sunni Arabs, and the Sunni Kurds.¹¹⁷

The flawed understandings, ensuing miscalculations, and subsequent ill-advised execution of the Iraq war were arguably the result of a failed organizational structure. Following World War II, the US Congress legislated the creation of the NSC to funnel policy thoughts for complex, multidimensional issues that often combined diplomatic, economic, military, intelligence and other considerations. James Pfiffner cites a broken policy development process within the Bush administration as the cause for a poor use of intelligence analysis and faulty decision-making for how to conduct the war. He argued that, “The striking thing about the decision to go to war was that there seemed to be no overall meeting of the principals [of the NSC] in which the issue of whether to go to war with Iraq was debated.”¹¹⁸ Much like Rumsfeld’s alleged centralization of Iraq planning to a small group within OSD, the Bush White House preferred to consult with a small group of advisors in lieu of a regularized policy development process or detailed deliberations.¹¹⁹ Chief among those advisors was his National Security

¹¹⁷Ibid., 169-214.

¹¹⁸James P. Pfiffner and Mark Phythian, eds., *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American Perspectives* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008), 216. Also see Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York, Sentinel, 2011), 456-57. Rumsfeld does not recall the President “ever asking me if I thought going to war with Iraq was the right decision” and thought that Bush must have assumed no opposition from the NSC principles to his decision to invade Iraq.

¹¹⁹See interview with Condoleeza Rice, National Security Advisor (2001-05), in Elisabeth Bumiller, “A Partner in Shaping an Assertive Foreign Policy,” *New York Times*, January 7, 2004, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/07/world/a-partner-in-shaping-an-assertive-foreign-policy.html>. In the interview, Rice states “This president has a very strong anchor and compass about the direction of policy, about not just what’s right and what’s wrong, but what might work and what might not work,” and that her job was translating the president’s instincts into policy. Bumiller also quotes Richard Haass, the former director of

Advisor, Condoleeza Rice. In his memoir, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld criticized Rice's "bridging approach" to build consensus among the principals of the NSC as problematic for presidential decision making. While temporarily mollifying to the principals, the approach often left fundamental differences "unaddressed and unresolved" by the President because there was no vigorous debate.¹²⁰

According to the National Security Council Project, Condoleeza Rice failed to challenge the consensus that emerged among senior policy makers following the president's early decision to invade Iraq in 2002.¹²¹ The finding reflects how Rice saw her role in the NSC. In her memoir, she stated, "the national security advisor is staff...[and] must find a way to get the secretaries [of State, Defense, etc.] to do what the President wants them to do."¹²² Instead of getting the best professional advice from career technocrats and professionals, the administration used departmental stovepipes to get information directly from the senior officials they preferred and eschewed utilizing the professional bureaucracy they believed was "deliberately and maliciously keeping information from them."¹²³ This flawed structure also enabled the administration to

policy planning at the DoS, about a meeting with Ms. Rice in July 2002, well before the president began making a public case for invading Iraq, to discuss with Ms. Rice "the pros and cons" of making Iraq a priority: "Basically she cut me off and said, 'Save your breath—the president has already decided what he's going to do on this.'"

¹²⁰Rumsfeld, 324-328.

¹²¹Ivo Daalder and I.M. Destler, "How National Security Advisers See Their Role," in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy*, 5th ed., ed. Eugene R. Wittkopf and James M. McCormick (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 185-197. This book is part of the National Security Council Project, established in 1998 as a collaborative undertaking of The Brookings Institution and the University of Maryland Center for International and Security Studies. Accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/archive/nsc/overview>.

¹²²Condoleeza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011), 14.

¹²³James P. Pfiffner, "The First MBA President: George W. Bush as Public Administrator," *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 1 (January 2007): 6-20. Also see Rice, 16. Rice points out that Secretaries Powell and Rumsfeld "did not confront each other face-to-face,

politicize the intelligence process and adjust analysis, ultimately contributing to incorrect assumptions about a post-invasion Iraq.¹²⁴

A faulty organizational structure contributed not only to faulty policy and strategy, but also to faulty organization for execution. Unlike Komer during the Vietnam conflict in either Washington as pacification coordinator directly for President Johnson, or in Vietnam as DepCORDS to Westmoreland in MACV, there was not a similarly appointed lead for reconstruction or nation building in Iraq that had broad interagency support, much less close presidential linkages and backing. Though NSD-24 delineated authority and responsibility for ORHA and reconstruction planning to DoD, research suggests that much of DoD's efforts were closed-door and disregarded the earlier interagency work completed by the Future of Iraq Project, despite a lack of expertise in ORHA. Within the administration, there were deep divides between DoD, DoS, the Office of the Vice President and other agencies. Secretary of State Powell, advocating for increased troop levels to secure victory and sustain post-invasion security, was largely overshadowed and dismissed.¹²⁵ Even Bremer, a career diplomat, had been subordinated to the OSD in Washington rather than the operational command in Iraq, as Komer had been to MACV in Vietnam.¹²⁶ Cordesman argues the organizational failures were compounded by a NSC

let alone in front of the President.”

¹²⁴Pfiffner and Phythian, 220-225.

¹²⁵Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 38-40. Also see Rumsfeld, 320-24. Rumsfeld stated that regrettably, Powell tended not to speak out at NSC or principals meetings.

¹²⁶Though Bremer cites his meeting with President Bush in late April in which he felt the president's message to Rice, Powell and Rumsfeld was clear—"I was neither Rumsfeld's nor Powell's man. I was the president's man."—he also talks about his "marching orders" received from Rumsfeld during his last day of stateside preparation. Bremer understood that his chain of command "ran through Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and straight to the president." See Bremer 4, 12-13 and 39.

that functioned more as an advisory body than an interagency manager for the President.¹²⁷ In her memoir, even Rice acknowledged the “distrust and dysfunction” within the “creaky” NSC. While talking positively about the NSC’s ability to manage Afghanistan, Liberia, NATO, the Balkans, and crises between India and Pakistan, she remembered “the taxing issue of Iraq” brought the NSC “nearly to the breaking point.”¹²⁸ With competition and tension inside the presidential cabinet, the NSC should have had a more prominent role to ensure coordination and unified action.

The assumption about a quick handover eliminating an extended reconstruction and nation building effort impacted the organizational structure for reconstruction in Iraq. Rather than leaving the experienced Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) headquarters in place to continue operations, or elevating the command structure in Iraq to a four-star military commander with responsibility for reconstruction, the post-invasion chain of command split responsibility in Iraq. LTG Ricardo Sanchez, who was then newly promoted and appointed to command the US Army Fifth Corps in its expanded role as Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) at nearly the same time as Bremer and the new CPA, was directed to coordinate with Bremer, while focusing the 177,000 troops on security and preparations to redeploy.¹²⁹ Bremer became the senior American in Iraq, but he had no command authority and no direct control of the vast military resources. Instead, he reported through Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld to President

¹²⁷Cordesman, 505-506. Also see Rumsfeld, 327-28. Rumsfeld points to Rice’s faulty management of the NSC process including the production of ambiguous meeting summaries, lack of resolution on issues, and decisions by lack of dissent rather than deliberate decision.

¹²⁸Rice, 22.

¹²⁹Daniel P. Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General’s Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 162. Bremer’s CPA subsumed Garner’s ORHA on May 11, while Sanchez transitioned his V Corps into the CJTF-7 HQ and relieved the CFLCC HQ on June 15. USCENTCOM was tasked to directly support the CPA, which became Sanchez’s main priority as the operational arm of USCENTCOM in Iraq.

Bush, while CJTF-7 worked for US Central Command (USCENTCOM).¹³⁰ Effectively, the post-invasion effort lacked continuity and was commanded from Washington with a weak attempt at unity of effort through directed coordination between the CPA and Sanchez's CJTF-7.¹³¹ Retired Lieutenant General Dan Bolger, *Why We Lost*, noted that for the first year after the fall of Saddam, the Americans struggled to understand and define the problem so they could put solutions in place.¹³²

Bolger's comment about the trouble defining the problem echoes the TRADOC *On Point* series and points again to faulty assumptions and miscalculations. The Contemporary Operations Study Team that compiled the historical account of US Army participation in the Iraq War described how this led to discontinuity and confusion, exemplified by three different campaign plans that existed between the start of the war and the summer of 2003. The authors referred to any campaign plan in general as "the single most important document" to direct the military effort and produce favorable strategic outcomes. For operations in Iraq, the initial campaign plan, COBRA II focused almost entirely on the conventional invasion operations to remove the Saddam regime, and reflected the tendency for military campaign planners to focus on the

¹³⁰See Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom, May 2003-January 2005: Transition to the New Campaign* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 153-160. The authors argued, "The interagency process of the US Government was simply not prepared to support the CPA in May 2003 with the personnel and expertise required by the situation in Iraq. Nor did the CPA have authority over the military instrument of national power in Iraq, the most important means of achieving the CPA's mandate in the absence of other national resources." Bremer was still the preeminent US authority in Iraq. Later, in November 2003, Bremer was removed from the DoD chain of command and began reporting directly to the NSC.

¹³¹Bremer, 4-7. Bremer also notes that "the White House had never intended ORHA's leader, retired LTG Jay Garner, to be the president's permanent envoy in Baghdad." Also see *On Point II* for more info on the short lived ORHA. In it, Garner reveals that he viewed the ORHA as "an adjunct agency that would briefly deal with anticipated humanitarian issues and assist the Iraqis in quickly taking responsibility for their own affairs" (149-153).

¹³²Bolger, 164.

conventional fight before transition to stability operations.¹³³ Fueled by the administration's pronounced distaste for nation building, DoD rebuffed ORHA efforts to develop an integrated, interagency political-military concept for the transition of Iraq.¹³⁴ The second plan, ECLIPSE II, provided the guidance for operations post-Saddam, but was published by CFLCC only after operations began in April 2003, during the invasion and run to Baghdad.¹³⁵ Again, this reflected a fateful historical tendency and allowed transition plans to "develop in isolation, thus hindering the establishment of critical linkages and smooth transitions between combat and post combat operations."¹³⁶ The second plan inevitably became irrelevant within weeks as many of its assumptions for stability after the invasion were invalidated by deteriorating security conditions and the unforeseen CPA orders for de-Ba'athification and dissolving the security forces. The new headquarters, CJTF-7 issued its draft for the new plan in August 2003.¹³⁷

¹³³See Kevin Benson, interview by John McCool, October 10, 2006, transcript, Operation Leadership Experiences Project, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 3-10, and Kevin C.M. Benson, "OIF Phase IV: A Planner's Reply to Brigadier General Aylwin-Foster," *Military Review* 86, no. 2 (March-April 2006): 61-63. Retired US Army Colonel Kevin Benson, the C/J5 Plans for CFLCC/Third Army from June 2002 through July 2003, discusses Phase IV (ECLIPSE II) planning that had origins dating to 1996. Benson states that he and a team planned extensively for post-invasion operations, but still the main effort of planning was on the invasion and major combat operations: "With the use of precision-guided munitions we could be even more focused, leading to operations going much faster, causing less damage and we wouldn't have to be tied down for years in what was being called 'nation building,' like in the Balkans." Benson also confirms a basic misunderstanding of the enemy, mostly premised on assumptions invalidated by CPA Orders 1 and 2: "we were prisoners of our education...we did not see external safe havens, a competing political ideology or vast support...[or enough] to call this enemy we would face an insurgency."

¹³⁴Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, 70-80.

¹³⁵The title for the post-invasion plan for Iraq takes its name from the original Operation Eclipse, the occupation plan for Germany at the end of Operation Overlord during World War II.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 66.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 161.

Bremer noted that his guidance for de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi security services came from Washington, more specifically from the Secretary of Defense with concurrence from the NSC. Rumsfeld's final guidance memo to Bremer stated "We will make clear that the Coalition will eliminate the remnants of Saddam's regime."¹³⁸ He even received the draft order for the "De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society" from Doug Feith, Rumsfeld's Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Similarly, Bremer emphasized the coordination he and the CPA had completed with Rumsfeld and OSD prior to issuing the order to abolish the Iraqi security services.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, the ECLIPSE II plan was complete and transition had, for all intents and purposes, really already begun. Washington and Bremer had just invalidated the transition plan's base assumptions.

OIF was a success for about three weeks. Unfortunately, the situation rapidly deteriorated once the American-led coalition achieved its initial goals of dismantling the Saddam regime. This was symbolically signified by the physical (and arguably orchestrated) toppling of the Saddam statue on April 9, 2003, just twenty days after the invasion began. George W. Bush proclaimed victory in a well-publicized appearance on the deck of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* a few weeks later. As the war transitioned from major combat operations to reconstruction and nation building, the lack of understanding of the human domain underpinning the emerging conflict potentially invalidated US military superiority and firepower. The American-led coalition was unprepared and ill-organized to deal with the growing unrest and burgeoning insurgency that would eventually lead to the infamous surge of 2007, complete withdrawal of American forces in 2011 amidst continuing violence, and a renewed crisis with the fall of Mosul and much of Northern and Western Iraq to the Islamic State in 2014. This chain of events, along with other disparate

¹³⁸Bremer, 39.

¹³⁹Ibid., 53-58.

attempts to prevent and solve emerging conflicts, has created a contemporary buzz for solutions to fix the American system of understanding and addressing conflict, most notably the WoG approach.

Unity of Effort—The Whole of Government Approach

In a recent article, Steven Walt described a hypothetical situation in which the US government makes a fateful decision to intervene in a troublesome area of the Islamic world. It backs some local leaders in hopes of building a better indigenous government that is more acceptable to the United States and is supported by its own people. Instead the intervention only stirs anti-American hostility and leads to years of conflict. Walt argued that this story is a *déjà vu* of the 21st-century situations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia, and Yemen. In his opinion, “US intervention has made a bad situation no better [in each case], and often made it worse. Yet despite this long string of failures, there doesn’t seem to be any official recognition that we might be dealing with these problems in the wrong way.”¹⁴⁰ Walt ended his opinion piece with a pertinent question: “Will anyone in Washington take a look at our recent track record, and start working on an alternate approach?”¹⁴¹ He argued for significantly less US interference in Middle East affairs in a largely hands off, do no harm principled manner.¹⁴²

Post-Cold War experience in general has highlighted that security and development are intertwined and that the transition from violent conflict is predicated on sustainable, legitimate

¹⁴⁰Steven M. Walt, “If Only We’d Just Spent More Blood and Treasure in Yemen: Five Lessons from Misadventures in the Middle East that Washington Just Can’t Seem to Learn,” *Foreign Policy*, January 23, 2015, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/23/if-only-wed-just-spent-more-blood-and-treasure-in-yemen/>.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

¹⁴²For similar argument with historical analysis of the currently manifested effects of the Cold War on the Middle East, see Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2009), 211-246.

governance. That experience has also shown that conflict will most often emerge in failed or failing states. Understanding the context and causes of these conflicts to effect transition to relative peace requires an understanding of the human domain and an integrated approach. In his 2010 *National Security Strategy*, President Obama specifically cites the WoG approach to “develop a deliberate and inclusive interagency process, so that we achieve integration of our efforts to implement and monitor operations, policies, and strategies.”¹⁴³ Among the findings in their 2010 task force report, the DSB offered a potential solution to Walt’s question: “Future military challenges cannot be overcome by military means alone, and they extend well beyond the traditional domain of any single government agency or department. They require our government to operate with unity, agility, and creativity, and will require devoting considerably more resources to non-military instruments of national power.”¹⁴⁴ Effectively implementing a new approach has proven difficult.

Much work has been done on developing the WoG approach and describing its advantages, disadvantages, and challenges. Some work has even been done to implement this approach. In 2005, President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44), “Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization,” outlining responsibilities for the new Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization

¹⁴³Obama, 14. Notably, language of this nature is absent from the 2015 *National Security Strategy*. With respect to security, the new strategy discusses the importance of international partners and multilateral organizations and a “Whole of Community” approach to build resilience in the American society and its infrastructure for Homeland Security. The focus of the 2015 *National Security Strategy* is in providing a “vision for strengthening and sustaining American leadership” and does not provide specific approaches for integrating capabilities like the 2010 NSS. See Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2015), accessed March 22, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf.

¹⁴⁴Department of Defense, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Understanding Human Dynamics*, xi.

(S/CRS) to integrate military and civilian capabilities. The Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 reinforced NSPD-44 and charged the DoS with leading the interagency effort and creating a civilian counterpart to the US military ready and capable to stabilize countries in the transition from war to peace. In 2011, the DoS expanded the S/CRS and created the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) as its successor to better anticipate and address emerging conflict. CSO recently ceased operations in Afghanistan, but still has ongoing major engagements in Honduras and Burma, and operations in twelve other nations globally.¹⁴⁵

In 2010, President Obama requested funding for the Civilian Stabilization Initiative (CSI) to build a permanent interagency Civilian Response Corps (CRC). According to a DoS information paper, “CSI will enable the President and Secretary to react to unanticipated conflict in foreign countries through the Interagency Management System (IMS), which produces interagency analysis and planning and puts civilian experts on the ground as they are needed, improving assistance, effectiveness, and increasing options available to support countries in crisis.”¹⁴⁶ According to the DoS website, as of July 2011, the CRC included members from nine US government agencies and had provided civilian responders to thirty-six embassies with major efforts in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Kyrgyz Republic.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the State Department’s own overview of the CSI described a program “to permit the Defense Department to focus on its core military mission responsibilities.”¹⁴⁸ The exclusion of DoD hardly qualifies the program as WoG.

¹⁴⁵See Department of State website, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/cso/>.

¹⁴⁶Department of State, “Civilian Stabilization Initiative” information paper, May 5, 2012, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/123604.pdf>, 499.

¹⁴⁷Accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/07/168648.htm>

¹⁴⁸Department of State, “Civilian Stabilization Initiative,” 499.

The arguments already described point to a WoG approach that, to be effective, must not only increase understanding of the human domain but must also achieve an organizational structure to facilitate and implement that understanding. Further, the approach must emanate from the most senior leaders within the government and its agencies to emplace methods and organizations to consistently and systematically address US responses to conflict. A number of approaches have emerged that offer solutions, two of which are offered here. Jack A. LeCuyer, former Distinguished Fellow with the Project on National Security Reform (PNSR), recommended a revised and properly resourced National Security Staff (NSS) for the 21st century. Gregory Paul Meyjes focused not on organization but on a deeper understanding of cultural matters. He argues not about a lack of language skills or field of experts on local cultures around the world, but rather about a lack of general learning of the skills needed to navigate the intercultural dynamics between cultures. Individually, these approaches improve aspects of the issue in much the same way the CRC feigned a way ahead. Instead, a combination of the two provides an optimal WoG solution.

Reorienting and strengthening the National Security Staff

In *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century*, LeCuyer argued the national security structure has not changed since the National Security Act of 1947.¹⁴⁹ Noting the “dysfunctional efforts to coordinate the War Department (Army and Army Air Corps) and the Navy” during World War II, the Congress enacted a conceptual and organizational framework to better advise the president on national security affairs. Though succeeding administrations have each

¹⁴⁹The organization and processes of the NSC typically change at the purview of each sitting presidential administration. LeCuyer’s point is really about the base structure for the NSC as a coordinating body for the executive departments and agencies of the government as legislated by Congress to provide advice on national security to the president.

personalized the NSC structure, the retrospective nature of its basic organizing principles have hampered successful contemporary WoG integration.¹⁵⁰ In her book *Flawed by Design*, Amy Zegart rejected this notion and argued that the Central Intelligence Agency, NSC, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had built in frictions from the beginning and that none were “designed to serve the national interest.”¹⁵¹ By weakening the coordinating agencies, the individual departments were preserving their capability to serve the nation individually rather than collectively. To fix the national security system, LeCuyer reasoned that, “Transformation of a truly collaborative whole-of-government national security system must begin at the top, at the strategic level, of the system—that is, the NSC system and the NSS as part of the presidency broadly construed.”¹⁵² Several studies and commissions reinforced his argument, including the Hart-Rudman Commission, the 9/11 Commission, and the PNSR.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰Jack A. LeCuyer, *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 1-9. Also see Alan G. Whittaker, Shannon A. Brown, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, *The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System*, Research Report, August 15, 2011, Annual Update (Washington, DC: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University, Department of Defense, 2011), 12. The editors stated “Those who wish to understand the operations of the NSC and its NSS staff must recognize that regardless of organizational charts or procedural memos produced by each administration, the actual processes are shaped by what the POTUS [President of the United States] wants...As such, formal lines of authority may be overridden or circumvented by informal authorities or relationships utilized by the President and/or his senior staff.”

¹⁵¹Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 52.

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵³See Charles Lathrop and Mackenzie M. Eaglen, “The Commission on National Security/21st Century: A Hart-Rudman Commission Primer,” *National Security Watch* 01-2 (Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, 6 April 2001) and Project on National Security Reform, *Forging a New Shield: Executive Summary*, November 2008, accessed February 2, 2015, http://0183896.netsolhost.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/pnsr-forging_exec-summary_12-2-08.pdf.

In the 21st century, boundaries have less meaning, threats and international actors have expanded, and globalization has connected the world in many new ways. National security is no longer played out in a series of state to state relations that can be managed at the top by continuous crisis management. Giving voice to the national security process of the early Cold War, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara remarked after the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, “There is no longer any such thing as strategy, only crisis management.”¹⁵⁴ The PNSR’s milestone report, *Forging a New Shield*, provides an assessment of national security decision making and policy implementation in 107 case studies. Of those cases since 1990, the report showed 71 percent with a high degree of interagency competitiveness with little evidence of assessment or strategic management.¹⁵⁵ In other words, decisions have most often been made and implemented amongst independently competing interests and self-serving entities, rather than managed and led toward common goals through selfless collaboration for the betterment of the whole. The 21st century requires a strategic manager freed from parochial interests and short-term perspectives to achieve national security goals for long term prosperity and security (see figure 5).¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴Cited in Michael Dobbs, “The Screw-Up Factor: Cool Crisis Management? It’s a Myth. Ask JFK.” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2008, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/story/2008/06/21/ST2008062101260.html>.

¹⁵⁵Jack A. LeCuyer, “The National Security Staff: What’s Missing in Whole of Government Approaches to National Security,” in *Conflict Management and “Whole of Government”*: *Useful Tools for U.S. National Security Strategy?*, eds. Volker C. Franke and Robert H. Dorff (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 238.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 231-237. Also see Peter Feaver and William Inboden, “A Strategic Planning Cell on National Security at the White House,” in *Avoiding Trivia: The Role of Strategic Planning in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Daniel W. Drezner (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 98-109.

	<i>FROM</i>	→	<i>TO</i>
System Performance	Rigid; slow; low trust; cultural impediments	→	Anticipatory, collaborative, agile, innovative, integrative
Presidential Expectations	Not stated	→	Strong Messages: national missions, integrated effort, collaboration, speed
Strategic Guidance	Limited, vague, no unity of purpose	→	Extensive, precise, drive department priorities, programs, and mindsets
Resource Allocation	Input-oriented; departmental focus; no cross-departmental tradeoffs	→	Output-oriented; tied directly to strategic objectives; National Security Staff w/ OMB
National Security Advisor Role	Advocate/Advisor/honest broker	→	Strategic manager orchestrating national solutions
National Security Staff Focus	Individual issues; policy, crisis management, staff the President	→	High policy, grand strategy, foresight, strategic system management, transparent and predictable processes
Issue Management	Rules-based, vertical structure	→	Issues decentralized via interagency teams; NSC chartering and oversights
System Management	Urgent at expense of the important	→	Key National Security Staff task, supported by Executive Secretary
Personnel Management	None/little; incentives reinforce departmentalism	→	Personnel properly incentivized, trained, prepared, and rewarded

Figure 5. National Security System Transformation

Source: Jack A. LeCuyer, *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 34.

The PNSR described a dysfunctional cycle that keeps the national security system disjointed and focused on the near term. The current system provides no incentive for governmental departments or agencies to fund interagency activities and so capabilities that fall outside of core mandates are rarely planned for, much less resourced and trained. As a result, challenges that fall outside of core competencies normally produce ad hoc arrangements and on-the-fly adjustments. In addition, new challenges that overtask the capabilities of the White House and NSC normally generate the appointment of a lead agency or czar, neither of which have de facto authority over other agencies or departments. They often are forced to rely on the power of persuasion or finding common interests and objectives. On the other hand, centralization of control at the White House or NSC challenges the span of control and ability to effectively manage policy implementation. Finally, increasing span of control problems decreases available time for long-term deliberate policy development and strategy formulation. To the contrary, time,

capacity, and expertise are critical enablers that allow debate and understanding of complex human conflicts. Unable to break the cycle, the national security system is increasingly only capable of handling a narrow range of challenges.¹⁵⁷ The implications are dangerous, in that the government has lost its capacity for sustained national strategic planning, and in turn, the ability to inform and support the understandings of the top executive branch officials.¹⁵⁸ As President Eisenhower famously restated, “plans are useless...but planning is indispensable.”¹⁵⁹

Breaking the cycle would require a reassignment of authorities and functions for the NSS and an accompanying realignment of resources. The transformation must begin at the top of the national security system to ensure the national security strategy is the focal point for change. LeCuyer began his comprehensive proposal by defining the roles of a transformed NSS, with the national security advisor as the supervisor. Among the four critical roles he defined, the NSS must function as the “driver of the end-to-end strategic management process” that conducts crisis management and anticipates opportunities and conflict. The end-to-end management process would entail policy formulation and strategy development and policy implementation, while also ensuring the NSS (in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget) aligns resources oriented on outcomes and interagency accomplishments towards both long-term strategic objectives and near-term contingencies.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷Project on National Security Reform, *Forging a New Shield: Executive Summary*, vii-x.

¹⁵⁸Aaron L. Friedberg, “Strengthening US Strategic Planning,” in *Avoiding Trivia: The Role of Strategic Planning in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Daniel W. Drezner (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), 98-109.

¹⁵⁹Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Remarks at the National Defense Executive Reserve Conference,” November 14, 1957, online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/print.php?pid=10951>.

¹⁶⁰LeCuyer, *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century*, 39-41.

As argued earlier, one of the keys to understanding and operating within the complex human environment is organizational structure. While many organizational structures and models could be conceived, LeCuyer provided a concise list of organizing principles for the proposed NSS to guide strategic management:¹⁶¹

1. The NSS *drives* the strategic management system to address the challenges of the contemporary environment in accordance with presidential guidance and decisions
2. The NSS *maintains a focus* on both long-range strategy and crisis management.
3. The NSS *operates* from an integrated, collaborative, WoG presidential perspective.
4. The NSS *leverages* the integration of all instruments of national power across the full spectrum end-to-end management functions: policy formulation, strategy development, planning and resource guidance to the departments and agencies, alignment of resources with strategy and national security missions, oversight of strategy and decentralized policy implementation, and interagency performance assessment and accountability.
5. The NSS *collaborates* with transparency to the other departments and agencies down to local level, and including non-governmental and private sector entities as appropriate.

The proposed organizing principles were nothing more than a start point around which to begin reorganizing the national security system. To transform the principles into structure, the new NSS could take some example from the DoD. The DoD maintains focus on long-term strategy development and implementation, sometimes simultaneously with crisis action planning and management, through the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) and the Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP). According to Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*,

¹⁶¹Ibid., 48-50.

“Through structured review, assessment, and modification, plans are constantly assessed and updated by the JFC [Joint Force Commander] and reviewed by the broader JPEC [joint planning and execution community] and senior DOD leadership. The open and collaborative planning process provides common understanding across multiple levels of organizations and the basis for adaptation and change.”¹⁶² These systems could serve to inform similar processes encompassing the entire security community as part of the NSS.

Recognizing money as the key thread to linking plans with action, and perhaps the key aspect for dysfunction and competition in the past, LeCuyer recommended resourcing changes. Most significantly, he proposed integrated budgets aligned to presidentially approved national security missions. Another key to enable long term focus is the resourcing of a new interagency strategic advisory board to advise the president’s grand strategy and national security strategy over and above issue-based implementation strategies and national security missions.¹⁶³ Peter Feaver established and led an office with similar function during the second term of President

¹⁶²Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 11 August 2012), x. The JSPS is the primary system by which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), in coordination with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the combatant commanders (CCDRs), conducts deliberate planning and provides military advice to the President and SecDef. The headquarters, commands, and agencies involved in joint operation planning or committed to a joint operation are collectively termed the JPEC. Although not a standing or regularly meeting entity, the JPEC consists of the CJCS and other members of the JCS, Joint Staff, the Services and their major commands, the combatant commands and their subordinate commands, and the combat support agencies.

¹⁶³LeCuyer, *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century*, 69-74. Also see Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 104. In 1943, prior to the establishment of the NSC, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, and de facto leader of the newly organized JCS, organized a similar body for the JCS, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC), to “obtain a good perspective by being allowed time for profound deliberation (104).” (104) Through close coordination with the DoS, “The Military authorities of the nation should share with the diplomatic and economic authorities the responsibility for shaping the national policy in peace as well as war. Since grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace, its scope includes all factors which will affect the peace, and extends to the relations of a nation to its allies and to neutrals as well as to its opponents.” (107)

George W. Bush. Though Feaver acknowledges falling “far short” of its goals and objectives, it is unclear why the Obama administration did not adopt a similar structure.¹⁶⁴ LeCuyer ends with an assertion about resourcing the effort for lasting effect: “Even a doubling of the size of the new combined NSS, given the nature of the work expected at the strategic level, is a very reasonable price for the “whole-of-government” coherency and consistency in managing the increased number of actors—state and nonstate—and the exceedingly complex national security issues and challenges of the 21st century.”¹⁶⁵

Understanding in the Human Domain—Ethno-Cultural Dynamics

Organizational change beginning at the top is important to improving the American approach for addressing conflict in the contemporary environment, but policy responses to conflict would remain dysfunctional without a better means to understand the human aspects of conflicts. In an essay prepared for a 2012-SSI symposium to debate and discuss the WoG approach, Gregory Meyjes called for an expanded model of international relations and social theory. Specifically, “To rally our best collective judgment to comprehending and sustainably reducing ethnic conflict requires a multisectoral stance in which philosophical, empirical, and practical insights are harnessed across a number of disciplines.”¹⁶⁶

According to Meyjes, the model for understanding human conflict and interaction needs to change from the current two-dimensional, us versus them, model to a three-tiered approach. The two-dimensional model reflects recent US military practices. Culture specific training about

¹⁶⁴Feaver and Inboden, 98.

¹⁶⁵LeCuyer, *A National Security Staff for the 21st Century*, 101.

¹⁶⁶Gregory Paul P. Meyjes, “Multiethnic Conflicts in US Military Theaters Overseas: Intercultural Imperatives,” in *Conflict Management and “Whole of Government”: Useful Tools for U.S. National Security Strategy?*, eds. Volker C. Franke and Robert H. Dorff (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 381.

‘them,’ such as language, history, and customs, is applied with operations by ‘us’ to increase force protection and the effectiveness of operations. The three-tiered approach is grounded in ethno-cultural dynamics and international justice that reflects ethnic, state, and global realities (the three tiers)—an ethno-cultural minority as the lowest common denominator, the responsibilities of states, and standards of international law and engagement. The weakness of this argument lies in its reliance on state and international systems, but it offers sound recommendations for understanding human conflict in terms of ethno-cultural dynamic. Culture and ethnicity overlap, according to Meyjes—culture as an expression of inherited identity and ethnicity as providing a subjective sense of belonging and ancestry, whether grounded in truth or myth. The three-tiered approach proposes understanding ethno-cultural dynamics through cultural self-awareness, intercultural competence, and applying to human conflict through recognition of cultural rights and the protection of sub-state ethno-nationalities.¹⁶⁷ Cultural self-awareness and intercultural competence are applicable means to better understand the human domain.

According to Meyjes, experts commonly agree that recognizing and understanding one’s own cultural biases, values, and outlook are the first key steps to gaining cross-cultural competency. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a leading proponent for intercultural competency, wrote in 2013 that “When a culture is critically aware of its own strengths and limitations, it can extend its horizons and enrich its intellectual and spiritual resources by learning from alternative visions in epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and worldviews.”¹⁶⁸ Without such a cultural self-awareness, one cannot begin to see how his own

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 383-386 and 413-416.

¹⁶⁸Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, Bureau for Strategic Planning, ed., *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework* (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2013), 4, accessed March 23, 2015, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002197/219768e.pdf>.

perceptions would taint his perception of external cultural and social matters. Therefore, “advanced cultural competency training thus first and foremost calls for the development of cultural self-awareness, recognition that and possibly how our inherited worldview is relative, and that what we perceive is not universally true.”¹⁶⁹ Meyjes even suggested that a well-intentioned but misinformed narrow focus on culture-specific training is what hampered the success of human terrain teams in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Intercultural learning pushes understanding human conflict into the study of ethno-cultural dynamics. Instead of culture-specific training, intercultural learning seeks to develop the skills at bridging communication and perception differences that not only divide, but also define relations between different ethno-cultural groups. According to UNESCO, intercultural competences are “abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles” and have a growing awareness among international policy-makers and civil societies to help them better negotiate cultural boundaries.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, culture-specific learning plays an informative role, but that role is secondary to understanding the significance of specific cultural identities in relation to others, recognizing how they interact, and developing skills to navigate those dynamics. Other skills that distinguish intercultural competency include: skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and attitudes of curiosity and openness.¹⁷¹ While attaining all of the skills for intercultural competence is a both a significant challenge and a time and resource consuming goal, progress in any represents an increase in learning about intercultural dynamics. The combination of cultural self-

¹⁶⁹Meyjes., 396.

¹⁷⁰Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, 5.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 16.

awareness and intercultural learning would prevent the application of cultural universals resulting from mistaking one's own outlooks as universally valid.¹⁷²

One last point needs to be taken from Meyjes conceptual framework in reference to sub-state nationalities. Nation-states are rarely ethnically homogenous. As of 1993, eighty percent of the world's states were ethnically diverse. He warns "the self-evident and self-serving way in which states—whether on their own reconnaissance or supported by other states—ignore sub-state nationalities and promote the illusion of cultural homogeneity contrasts with the perceived upward trend in global ethno-nationalism."¹⁷³ This trend could describe, at least in part, some of the motivations and underlying sources of conflict discussed in Iraq. The recognition of sub-state nationality and ethno-cultural identity is especially poignant in so-called failing states where the lack of state power and control are seen as threats to American national security interests, or demand attention due to human rights abuses, poverty, or disease. Addressing these issues externally, that is via American intervention, necessitates cultural self-awareness and intercultural skill to effectively negotiate the ethno-cultural dynamics.

Applying a WoG approach without an understanding of ethno-cultural dynamics is problematic. In theory, a WoG approach would expand the aperture of available resources and capabilities in the interests of national security. Unfortunately, it does not appear that WoG approaches have focused on cultural matters in order to understand the roots of human conflict before applying solutions. Without a coherent approach including cultural study (both cultural self-awareness and intercultural skills), the security system risks ethno-centrism and the application of cultural universals. "In short, though the requisite expertise may most easily be found in civil society... [a WoG approach] is no guarantee for intercultural competency."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷²Meyjes, 399-403.

¹⁷³Ibid., 410.

¹⁷⁴Meyjes, 415.

Conclusion

If there is anything to learn from the American experiences in the Vietnam and Iraq, the importance of understanding the human aspects of conflict is certainly among the top on the list of lessons. Unfortunately, understanding a situation by itself is often very different from understanding a situation in context or in relation to surrounding circumstances. Understanding, therefore, can often be described in terms of ‘where I sit is where I stand.’ In other words, one’s understanding is often blurred simply from their own self-centric perspective. To understand a situation more broadly in terms of the physical, cultural, and social aspects of the people one seeks to influence, cultural self-awareness can widen the aperture so that one may see or understand the situation from different perspectives. Coupled with an intercultural understanding, one can better see the ethno-cultural dynamics that underpin human relations and human conflict.

There are multiple perspectives from which to understand the human aspects of conflict. One mentioned previously is TRADOC’s American Soldier-centric perspective that seeks to improve operational performance and post-operational resilience through studies and initiatives for human performance optimization. The other perspective is one that examines the rest of the operational environment manifested in this research through multiple initiatives at defining the human domain, human aspects of military operations, and human terrain. While both perspectives are important to improve operational capability during force employment, this research focused on the external portion of the environment and argued that policy makers must better understand the environment they seek to influence. The military services and other departments and agencies focus on the human dimensions of their own people and how best to maximize their performance and capabilities.

Just as there is danger in analogous historical comparison, there is also danger in using theater level organizations like CORDS and the CPA to draw conclusions about necessary reforms for the NSC. In the implementation of policy, however, the theater operational level is

dependent upon decisions and organizational structures built by national strategic leaders and policy decision makers. For WoG transformation to facilitate operations in the human domain at the theater level, reform must begin at the very top of the national security system.

As noted earlier, one of the most resounding lessons from Vietnam and the CORDS experience was the importance of unity of effort. Unity under CORDS did not come until the organizational structure was changed by President Johnson directly, and more so with his direct placement of Robert Komer, one of his personal advisors, as CORDS's first director and Deputy to the MACV commander. Komer's efforts began in Washington to bring the interagency efforts together, then continued in the operational theater. The national security system failed of its own accord to bring unity to the dysfunctioning and largely self-serving departments, agencies and others within the national security community.

Though manifested differently, the situation leading up to and shortly after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 points to a similar problem in the national security community. The tendency toward consensus stemming from limited debate and input constrained the administration's thorough understanding of the human aspects of the operational environment in Iraq. CPA Orders 1 and 2 reflected decisions made in Washington without the input of ECLIPSE II planners operating on very different assumptions and recent exposure to the operational environment.

The American national security community is a plethora of departments, agencies, and advisors each intended to provide elements from which the US government can draw power, influence, and situational understanding. This study revealed that the American organizational structure to bring these elements together to understand human conflict have been inadequate to the task. One person's understanding of the human aspects of a conflict may reflect an important diplomatic, informational, military or economic aspect of a situation, but not necessarily one that provides a comprehensive picture from all aspects or considers the complexity of national

security in a comprehensive manner. The organizational structure that brings these varied understandings together becomes critically important.

The WoG approach proposed by Jack LeCuyer and others and described in this study provides a potential and important solution to improving the NSS. As the President's direct advisory council, the NSS is the principal organizational structure to bring all of these individual understandings to the table for decisions. Reform of the system must begin at this top level through a systematic method with a long-term approach, or it will be hard to generate operable structures or solutions in the field under crisis conditions.

The study has also shown that organizational structure alone is not enough to develop working solutions. The organization is simply the framework to bring ideas and proposed solutions together for consideration, and those ideas in general must be grounded in an understanding of the human domain. Gregory Meyjes' approach to understanding in the human domain is through ethno-cultural dynamics via cultural self-awareness and intercultural skills. While not everyone within the structure need be intercultural experts, some do. Just as reform for the organizational structure needs to begin at the top level of the government's security community, so should the appreciation and requirement for this nuanced understanding of the human domain.

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