Asymmetry and Complexity

Selected Papers from the 2005 Rowell Seminar and the 2005 Chief of Army's Conference

Edited by
Scott Hopkins

Land Warfare Studies Centre
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Foreword

This volume, drawing on presentations made to the 2005 Rowell Profession of Arms Seminar and the 2005 Chief of Army's Conference, assembles the perspectives of leading thinkers on issues pertinent to warfighters, policy makers and elected officials for today and tomorrow. It poses challenging questions with the intent of informing opinion and sparking debate.

For many citizens of the West, their understanding of the challenges facing their military establishments is limited to what they experience through news outlets and big-budget Hollywood movies. Enemies are located with omnipotent high-technology, are easily distinguishable from the local population, and display neither craft nor skill in their application of lethal violence—unless, of course, they are terrorists slaughtering innocent civilians. Yet the reality of military deployments is vastly different. Adversaries in Iraq and Afghanistan display a remarkable ability to adapt to the Western way of war, identifying weaknesses and exploiting them.

No longer do the armies of nation-states array themselves in neat lines for decisive battles. A nation's military forces are as likely to confront non-state actors—such as terrorists, armed mobs, militias or gangs—as they are the conventional forces of other nation-states. The insight, revealed by the attacks of 11 September 2001, is that one threat does not replace the other; rather, defence forces must be flexible enough to counter a spectrum of such threats. In a globalised world of readily accessible technology, the ability to forecast with accuracy has diminished as the pace of change increases. Rather than simply training to defeat conventional opponents, Western militaries must diversify their efforts whilst still providing policy options to the governments and nations they serve.

In the first chapter of this volume, Coral Bell paints the picture of a global environment where the Australian Defence Force must prepare for both major state-on-state conflict as well as other tasks that have traditionally been viewed as subordinate to high-intensity warfighting. Australia resides in the part of the globe that can expect significant shifts in power—military, economic, diplomatic and demographic—as nations such as India, China, Vietnam and Bangladesh come to terms with developing economies and growing populations. Add to that mix real threats of environmental or energy-based conflict, requiring troops for peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention or nation-building, and the challenges multiply. Ben McDevitt reflects on his experience developing just such a deployment as leader of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, highlighting what was done successfully and drawing lessons for improvement.

This is a world of globalised, cellular militancy, categorised by Marites Vitug as ideological in nature and exhibiting determination to win. Defeating the causes of terrorism necessitates cooperation between intelligence and police services and military organisations, usually across national borders. No longer is the military instrument enough, and recognition of the need to integrate and coordinate national and international efforts is growing. Jonathan Bailey explores some of the common failings of military establishments to prepare for the future through insightful use of case histories. Instant and persistent media, fickle or uninformed electorates and the rise of asymmetric threats create complex environments. Many of these themes are echoed in Stephen Biddle's contribution, which analyses the myths and realities of operations in Afghanistan that led to the fall of the Taliban. The apparent 'revolution' of joining special forces to air power and precision strike is shown to be a chimera, highly dependent upon the environment and context in which these operations occurred. Lastly, Alice Hills peers into the Western military nightmare: urban operations. From Stalingrad and Berlin in the Second World War, through Grozny and Mogadishu in the 1990s, to recent operations in Jenin and Baghdad, warfighting in cities has led to massive

destruction and high non-combatant casualties. In more complex terrain, especially as populations around the world urbanise, the advantages of high technology dissipate and the cost of errors in targeting and collateral damage grow exponentially.

The problems posed by asymmetry and complexity seem insurmountable, but these are exactly the challenges that Australia's defence forces must confront.

Scott Hopkins
Land Warfare Studies Centre
December 2006

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFP	Australian Federal Police
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CPP	Close Personal Protection
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (United States)
GLF	Guadalcanal Liberation Front (Solomon Islands)
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
MCO	Major Combat Operations
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PPF	Participating Police Force
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RSIP	Royal Solomon Islands Police
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SRG	Special Republican Guard (Iraqi)
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTC	World Trade Center

Contributors

Major General (Retd) Jonathan BAILEY, CB MBE PhD retired from the British Army in early 2005. In his last appointment, from 2003–2005, he was the Director General Development and Doctrine, responsible for the concepts and doctrine of the British Army and the development of its structure and equipment for the next 30 years. The appointment was also responsible for the British Army's relations with all other armies and planning their future interoperability. Previous appointments included, Commander 40th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery (RA), Colonel Defence Studies, Chief Fire Coordination Headquarters ACE Rapid Reaction Corps and Director Royal Artillery.

General Bailey's operational experience include tours in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, Officer Commanding Troops aboard the *MV Baltic Ferry* sailing to the South Atlantic in 1982, Operations Officer 4th Field Regiment RA during the Falklands War, Chief Joint Implementation Commission HQ Kosovo Force and Chief Liaison Officer to the Yugoslav General Staff and Kosovo Liberation Army in 1999. He is now the Director of the Centre for Defence and International Security Studies (CDISS), based in Henley-on-Thames. He is also a consultant to the Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War at Oxford University, where he runs a series of seminars on 'Campaigning and Generalship'.

General Bailey has written and lectured on the evolution of warfare and British defence policy. His works include *Field Artillery and Firepower*, which was published by the AUSA/NIP in 2004. His new work, *Great Power Strategy in Asia: Empire, Culture and Trade, 1905-2005*, is a centennial perspective on the Russo-Japanese War and was published in October 2006.

Dr Coral BELL, AO was one of the first women appointed to the Australian Diplomatic Service by Dr Evatt when it was being reconstructed after the Second World War. After six years in the Service, she undertook graduate work at the London School of Economics, and then research work at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Subsequently, she embarked on an academic career, successively at the Universities of Manchester, Sydney, the London School of Economics, and the University of Sussex, where she held the Chair of International Relations. In 1977 she returned to Australia, to a research appointment at the Australian National University. In recent years she has been a member of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, where she works mostly on the interaction between strategy and diplomacy. Dr Bell's most recent books are *A World Out of Balance*, which is a study of the current unipolar world of United States paramountcy, especially in military capacity, and *Living with Giants*, written for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a study of the potential problems facing Australian policymakers in the next few decades. She was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday 2005 Honours List.

Dr Stephen D. Biddle is Senior Fellow for Defense Policy with the Council on Foreign Relations, Associate Professor of National Security Studies at the US Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), and Adjunct Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. Before joining the SSI in June 2001, he was a member of the political science faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has held research positions at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) in Alexandria, Virginia; Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA); and the Kennedy School of Government's Office of National Security Programs.

Dr Biddle's book *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* was published by Princeton University Press in July 2004, and won the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Award Silver Medal for 2005. His other publications include articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *International Security*, *Survival*, *The Journal of Politics*, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Security Studies*, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Contemporary Security Policy, Defense Analysis,* and *Military Operations Research*; shorter pieces on military topics in *The Wall Street Journal, Orbis, Joint Force Quarterly*, and *Defense News*; various chapters in edited volumes; and 28 IDA, SSI, and NATO reports. His research has won Barchi, Rist, and Impact Prizes from the Military Operations Research Society, and he won the Army Superior Civilian Service Medal in 2003. He holds AB (1981), MPP (1985), and PhD (Public Policy, 1992) degrees, all from Harvard University.

Dr Alice Hills is Professor in Conflict & Security in the School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds, England, where she directs the post-graduate program on conflict, security and development. Previously she taught defence studies for King's College, London at the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College, lectured in policing and public safety at the University of Leicester, acted as a course director in crisis management for the Home Office, and was a research assistant in the Cabinet Office.

Dr Hills has been a senior research associate at the University of London's Centre for Defence Studies, a member of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces's international border security advisory board, and a visiting research fellow at Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. She provided written evidence to the UK's House of Commons Defence Committee, on *The Strategic Defence Review*, and on the implications of 11 September

2001 for the United Kingdom. She has also presented reports and briefs to a number of organisations, including the Ministry of Defence and the Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College.

Dr Hills has a long-standing interest in urban operations, counter-insurgency and security governance. This was recognised by the British Academy, which in 2001 awarded her a 'Thank-offering to Britain' fellowship to investigate urban operations as a potentially critical security issue. Her findings were published in *Future War in Cities: Rethinking a Liberal Dilemma* (Cass, 2004). 'Fear and loathing in Falluja' in *Armed Forces & Society* is a current related article. The core of Dr Hills's research focus is to develop a comparative framework for analysing why public police and paramilitary forces evolve as they do, and what explains their interaction with governments, militaries and civil society in fragile societies. Relevant publications include *Border Security in the Balkans: Europe's Gatekeepers* (IISS Adelphi Paper No. 371, 2005), and *Policing Africa: Internal Security and the Limits of Liberalisation* (Lynne Rienner, 2000).

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy was born in Melbourne in 1952. In 1974 he graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, with a Bachelor of Arts degree and was allocated the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. His regimental appointments have included Platoon Commander in 8/9 RAR, Second-in-Command of 5/7 RAR (Mechanised), and Commanding Officer of 8/9 RAR. In 1981 he was posted with the British Army in Hong Kong. During this time he served as Operations Officer and as a Company Commander in the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles. Lieutenant General Leahy's training appointments include Instructor Infantry at the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, and Instructor Tactics at the Infantry Centre, Singleton. From 1987 to 1990 he was posted as the Australian Exchange Officer at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, where

he instructed in Joint and Combined Operations and Counter Revolutionary Warfare and completed a Master of Military Arts and Science Degree. For his service as an instructor at the Command and General Staff College he was awarded the United States Army Meritorious Service Medal.

Lieutenant General Leahy has completed three staff appointments in Army Headquarters. In 1993 he was the Military Assistant to the Chief of the General Staff and during 1994 and 1995 he was the Director of Army Research and Analysis for which he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 1995 Queen's Birthday Honours List. In 1997 Lieutenant General Leahy was promoted to Brigadier and posted as Commander of the 3rd Brigade, the Australian Defence Force's Ready Deployment Force. In April 1999, Lieutenant General Leahy was appointed Chief of Staff at Headquarters Australian Theatre. Lieutenant General Leahy is a graduate of the Australian Army Command and Staff College, the United States Army Command and General Staff College, the British Higher Command and Staff Course and is a Fellow of the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies. He was the Deputy Chief of Army immediately prior to assuming his post as Chief of Army. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the 2002 Queen's Birthday Honours List for his service in senior command and staff appointments in the Australian Defence Force. On 28 June 2002, he was promoted to Lieutenant General and assumed the appointment of Chief of Army. He has since been awarded the United States Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service as Chief of Army. On 29 June 2005, Lieutenant General Leahy was reappointed as Chief of Army for a further three years.

Ben McDevitt, AM, APM was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the CrimTRAC Agency on 23 January 2006, having previous

been National Manager Counter Terrorism with the Australian Federal Police (AFP) at the rank of Assistant Commissioner. Prior to joining the AFP in 1983, he served as a paratrooper in the Australian Regular Army for three years. During 22 years with the AFP he has worked in a wide variety of policing roles, predominantly in the areas of criminal investigation, Education and Training, Internal Investigations, and Operations Policy.

In 1997 he fulfilled the role of Operations Superintendent with the United Nations civilian police in Cyprus. In 1998 he served as a police advisor to the multinational Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group and, in early 1999, served as a short-term advisor to the Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. In November 1999, he was promoted to the position of Commander of Police Operations for the Australian Capital Territory. In this role he was responsible for the delivery of the full range of community policing services to the 320 000 residents of the Australian Capital Territory.

In February 2002, Mr McDevitt was promoted to the rank of Assistant Commissioner in charge of AFP National Operations. In this role he was responsible for coordinating the AFP's investigative response to a range of criminal activity including terrorism, people smuggling, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and high-tech crime. He was also responsible for the oversight of special reference investigations forwarded to the AFP by the Federal Government. In October 2002, he played a coordination and oversight role in the Australian Federal Police's involvement in the joint investigation conducted into the Bali bombings. In the aftermath of the bombings, he was also actively engaged in negotiating the establishment of Joint AFP and State Police Counter Terrorism Teams in every Australian capital city. In 2003, Mr McDevitt was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for his work following the Bali bombings in October 2002.

In May 2003, Mr McDevitt was selected to plan and deploy a police-led peacekeeping operation to restore law and order to Solomon Islands. He subsequently served in the Solomons as Commander of the multinational Participating Police Force and as Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force for a period of 12 months. On 24 July 2004, the first anniversary of the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, codenamed Operation *Helpem Fren*, Mr McDevitt was awarded the Cross of Solomon Islands for distinguished service to the people of Solomon Islands.

Mr McDevitt has served as Chair of the Australasian Crime Commissioners' Forum, as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee on Drugs and on the Executive of the National Drug Law Enforcement Research Fund. He is a keen advocate of a broad range of crime prevention strategies and has a special interest in police accountability and use of force. He holds a Masters degree in Public Policy and Administration, a Graduate Diploma in Executive Leadership and is a graduate of the Police Management Development Program and the Police Executive Leadership Program.

Marites Danguilan Vitug is the Editor-in-Chief of *Newsbreak*, a fortnightly news and current affairs magazine in the Philippines. Under her leadership, *Newsbreak* has risen to become one of the leading news magazine in the country. It has won major awards for investigative reporting in the Philippines and regional awards (Developing Asia Journalism Awards of the World Bank Institute). The journal, *Foreign Policy*, has cited *Newsbreak* for its reporting on peace and conflict in Mindanao.

Ms Vitug has worked as a journalist for more than 20 years beginning work as a political reporter for *Business Day*. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Broadcast Communication from the University of the Philippines, where she also pursued a postgraduate

course in mass communications. Her interests include security issues, the military, and politics. She is the author of *Power from the Forest: the Politics of Logging*, *Jalan-Jalan: A Journey through EAGA* (with Criselda Yabes, 1998), and *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* (with Glenda M. Gloria, 2000). *Power from the Forest,* which won the National Book Award in 1994, was cited in the *International Herald Tribune* as a 'well-written and well-produced book (that) deserves a wider audience…'. *Jalan-Jalan* was chosen by *Asiaweek* as one of the best books on Asia for 1999. *Under the Crescent Moon* won the National Book Award in 2001. Her writing has been published in a number of periodicals including the *International Herald Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, Newsday*, and *Asahi Shimbun*. Her other books include *The Politics of Environment in Southeast Asia* (Routledge, London and New York) and *The Journal of Environment and Development* (University of California in San Diego).

Among her awards are the Courage in Journalism Award from the US-based International Women's Media Foundation, conferred for her reportage on the plunder of Palawan's forests, the Jaime V. Ongpin Investigative Journalism award (as finalist), and the Ten Outstanding Young Filipinos awards (in the field of journalism). For a story she co-wrote in *Newsweek*, she and her colleagues received the 1994 Harry Chapin Media Awards, second prize for Best Periodical. In 1986–1987, Ms Vitug was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, after which she undertook postgraduate studies in international relations at the London School of Economics.

PART I

Introduction: Asymmetry

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy

Since the catastrophic attacks on the United States in September 2001, strategists, scholars and commentators have grappled with a series of questions: 'What is the essential nature of the era through which we are passing?', 'Has everything changed?', or 'Has anything changed?' However, the most important question is perhaps, 'What is the nature of warfare and statecraft in the twenty-first century?'

The answers to these inquiries have varied rather widely. However, there is an emerging consensus that conventional Western military forces will be increasingly required to confront irregular and asymmetric enemies. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the analysis of the major trends currently influencing warfare and geopolitics. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a discernible shift away from traditional state versus state military conflict. Moreover, every assessment available to the Australian Government and its national security planners predicts that this trend is likely to continue well into the future. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the coherent bipolar world of Westphalian states has fragmented. There is now a dangerous proliferation of non-state actors who have emerged as the main source of threats to the nation state. Small cells of individuals are now capable of generating strategic military effects. As the American strategic analyst, Philip Bobbitt has explained:

> We are entering a period in which a small number of people, operating without overt state sponsorship but using the enormous power of modern computers, biogenetic pathogens, air transport

> and even small nuclear weapons, will be able to exploit the tremendous vulnerabilities of contemporary open societies.[1]

We have encountered non-state actors before; but right now, because of globalisation, they pose a much more dire threat than in the past. Previously, theories of counterinsurgency warfare have usually been predicated on the contest between the insurgent and the state for the allegiance of a population within a discrete polity. However, globalisation and the fragmentation of states have rendered that model obsolete. Non-state actors can now exploit their ready access to sophisticated information and communications capabilities, allowing them to operate across physical boundaries in the same fashion as any international investment bank. Likewise, technological innovation has revolutionised the lethality of the weapons available to such groups. An individual with a man-portable missile or a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) can defeat any vehicle or aircraft in the arms inventory of a modern state.

The seamless, real-time operation of black markets in cash, arms and drugs has undermined the monopoly of the nation-state over the most sophisticated means of violence. While this last issue is a disturbing trend, there is some small comfort to be drawn from this nightmare—the conflation of the lethal capabilities of state and non-state actors actually simplifies the force structuring and training criteria of conventional forces.

Simply put, the type of Army that can survive on the complex asymmetric battlefield of the twenty-first century will also possess the protection, firepower, agility and situational awareness to fight conventional wars. Accordingly, the Australian Army has set development priorities that assume it will face potent, unconventional adversaries with access to the latest in RPGs, who are network enabled, even if only by mobile phone.

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1 Philip Bobbitt, 'Virtual states are a new, elusive threat', *Time Magazine*, 1 September 2002, < www.time.com/time/covers/1101020909/abobbit.html >.

The attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 were a textbook example of an asymmetric enemy exploiting widely available technology to achieve devastating strategic effect. The attacks were planned via Internet chat rooms. Manoeuvre was synchronised through mobile phones and the attackers operated across cultural boundaries through competent language skills and excellent human intelligence capabilities. In the era of globalisation, New York and Washington, DC—and even Melbourne and Sydney—can as easily become the battlespace as Mogadishu or Honiara.

To combat such threats, the Army needs to develop the capabilities that will allow it to survive and win in complex environments. The Australian Army must be optimised for close combat in complex, predominantly urban, terrain while acting as part of a joint inter-agency task force. At the same time, the Army must be capable of adapting to other tasks, from medium-intensity warfighting in a coalition setting, to peace support operations abroad and national support tasks at home during peacetime. All elements of the deployed land force must be provided with protected mobility, firepower, situational awareness and signature management to enable them to perform their missions without undue risk.

Ultimately, it is this hardened and networked force that will provide our optimum response to an asymmetric enemy by applying combat power through the combined-arms team. Its enhanced communication capabilities will permit command to be devolved to lower levels and allow forces to operate as small, agile teams. The next few years will present great challenges to the armies of the West in confronting asymmetry. However, by the clever use of appropriate technology in the hands of well-trained and disciplined soldiers, it will be possible to restore symmetry to the conflict with insurgents.

Chapter 1

Asymmetric Wars

Coral Bell

My knowledge of asymmetric warfare is not derived from personal experience at the sharp end of war—rather, it is historical and theoretical. I want to begin this chapter by defining asymmetric wars as those conflicts in which the two sides have different weapons available to them and pursue different strategies. Only the term ‘asymmetry’ is new, and based on this definition there have been many asymmetric wars in the past. All the colonial wars of the nineteenth century, for instance, were asymmetric; a point celebrated in British poet Hilaire Belloc’s mocking little verse:

> Always remember we have got the maxim gun and they have not.[2]

All the insurgencies of more recent years would also qualify under this definition: for example, the Irish Republican Army’s (IRA) 30-year campaign against the British Government. However, the conflicts most on peoples’ minds at the moment when they talk of asymmetric wars are those in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the possible inclusion of those between the Israelis and the Palestinians and involving Russia and Chechnya.

Much of this chapter focuses on the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. Firstly, I would argue that those two sets of hostilities should be regarded as separate but related campaigns in a larger, longer global struggle, which can be called the ‘Jihadists’ War’. This War started, according to Osama bin Laden, in 1982, and it is likely to

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[2] Belloc, Hilaire, *Complete Verse of H. Belloc*, rev. edn., G. Duckworth, London, 1970, p. 184.

go on for quite a while yet. Certainly it can be expected to continue for the rest of this decade and probably throughout the next.

Iraq and Afghanistan ought to be regarded as separate campaigns in the larger conflict in precisely the same way in which North Africa and the Pacific saw separate but related campaigns in the overall context of the Second World War. Of course, in any campaign in any war, it is important to ask whether a particular battle or campaign served the overall political endeavour. However, before making those judgements, let me outline the reasons why I prefer to describe the conflict which dominates world politics at present as the 'Jihadists' War' rather than by the term more familiar from political speeches—the 'Global War on Terror'.

Terrorism is a strategy or a tactic rather than a political entity. The adversary, however, is certainly a political entity, and quite a powerful one, involving a worldwide network of jihadists' cells—some of them in the great cities of the West, including Australian cities. The underlying potential constituency for these jihadists, if we do not 'box clever', is more than a billion people, most of whom live in our part of the world. When talking of the military struggle, the terms 'Islamic fundamentalist', 'Islamo-fascist', 'radical', or 'Islamist' ought to be avoided. They denote political or religious stances, not terrorist intentions. The government of Saudi Arabia is Islamic fundamentalist, yet it is under attack by the jihadists and its collapse would be judged by the jihadists themselves as a more vital success for them than even the attacks on 11 September 2001. The jihadists are those specifically on active service as warriors, intent on overturning the contemporary power structure of the world in the name of one minority interpretation of Islam.

I believe President Bush conceded the point of correctly defining the adversary when he said during the 2004 presidential election

campaign that terrorism could not be defeated.[3] Obviously, anyone with an elementary knowledge of chemistry, like Timothy McVie, can put a bomb together and find a truck to deliver it, if they have sufficient grievance against a government. However, the jihadists, as an organised political force, can be worn down by a process of attrition and their capacity to do damage contained and diminished. To my mind, that is the likeliest way for the overall asymmetric conflict to be won—a point that I will re-examine later.

I stress again that the jihadists, at present, represent a minority interpretation of Islam. The term 'jihad' has many meanings in Islamic theology. It can mean simply the effort of the true believer to live up to the teachings of the Prophet. However, the meaning of the term for those I would at present class as jihadists was defined for them by one of their clerics, Sheikh Umar abd ar-Rahman, who inspired the first attempt in 1993 to blow up the World Trade Center (WTC). He said:

> Do jihad with the sword, with the cannon, with the grenades, with the missiles to break and destroy the enemies of Allah, their high buildings and the buildings in which they gather their leaders.[4]

The targets were, in the US context, the WTC and buildings in Washington, DC. The jihadists' war differs from many previous asymmetric wars, or national or religious insurgencies, with which we are familiar from past history in three important respects. Firstly, its political objectives are global rather than local. Secondly, so is its strategic and tactical reach. Thirdly, whereas most other terrorist organisations have been intent on what former British Prime Minister

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3 When asked by NBC 'Today' host Matt Lauer, Bush said "I don't think you can win it. But I think you can create conditions so that those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable …", < www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5866571/ >.

4 Cited in Steven Simon, *The New Terrorism and the Peace Process*, 7 February 2001, p. 11, accessed at < http://www.biu.ac.il/Besa/publications/simon/new-terrorism.html >.

Margaret Thatcher called 'the oxygen of publicity'[5] rather than mass casualties, this organisation believes itself to be in an all-out war—one in which it is justified and sees itself as justified in inflicting as much death and destruction as that war requires.

Like the First and Second World Wars, it is a hegemonial war—a war to determine the order of power in the world. It is also the only such war in modern times to be declared by a non-state actor. Of course, many civil wars and insurgencies have been conducted by such groups, but their objectives have been local rather than global, as in the case of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA: Basque for 'Basque Homeland and Freedom'), or the Chechens. However, I fear that the Chechen conflict has now been converted by bad Russian strategies into a second front in the 'Jihadists' War'. That is a danger we might face elsewhere—maybe quite close to home—if local insurgencies are badly handed. This is possible, for instance, in Aceh, Thailand, the Philippines, or maybe in Central Asia. So, to sum up, the world is facing an asymmetric war against a non-state actor—an adversary that is very hard to hit, one for whom the whole world is the battlespace and one who has no material assets which can readily be put at risk by the concentrated weapons of modern war.

In fact, I believe that the only assets which can readily be targeted are the flow of financial resources, which in the past came mostly from Saudi Arabia disguised as Islamic charities and from the actual jihadists themselves—especially their leadership. All these factors seem to underline the vital point that the outcome will, in the end, mostly be determined by the operations of intelligence services and police forces rather than military campaigns. Nevertheless, there have

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5 '[Democratic nations] must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend', London meeting of the American Bar Association on 15 July 1985, available at < www.bartleby.com/63/41/8341.html > (cited 27 May 2006).

been two major military campaigns intended to further Western objectives in the war against the jihadists—Afghanistan and Iraq. We therefore must ask of those intelligence services and police forces whether those campaigns furthered the objectives of the West in the overall struggle? It is much easier to return a favourable verdict in the case of Afghanistan than that of Iraq. In both countries, the Coalition's aim was basically political—to replace the existing regime in the country concerned with one more acceptable to Washington and its allies. For the time being, that objective has been achieved in both countries. Unfortunately, one has also to ask as to the durability of each regime and at what cost regime change was achieved? Much military effort has been undertaken in the past by assorted conquerors to reform both countries, but so far not many of those efforts have achieved long term success. The regime devised by the British for Iraq in the 1920s, largely through T.E. Lawrence, lasted for about 30 years and, if this one lasts as long, it might see the world through a difficult transition. We can only hope for the best in both cases.

On the question of past, current and continuing military operations, the answer is clearly that the cost has been vastly higher in Iraq than in Afghanistan. Such calculations do not merely include the human and military costs to the US forces and the much greater costs both in casualties and infrastructure for the Iraqi people, but also the diplomatic costs of the operation to the United States. Washington policymakers behind the decision to go into Iraq had wider ambitions than success in that country.

A new domino theory has been promulgated by some of President Bush's policymakers. The argument is that regime change in Iraq will create pressures for political and social change in the region's 21 other Arab countries. These changes will lead in time to a process of democratisation, which would make them friendlier towards the West, be better for the peoples concerned, and perhaps even serve as an example to other Muslim countries.

There is certainly no doubt that the invasion of Iraq tossed a very large rock into the somewhat murky and stagnant waters of Middle Eastern politics and its waves have been felt from Lebanon to Libya. However, there is still uncertainty about the durability of current reform movements in the Arab world, including Iran. All of which means that the jury is still out on whether the two campaigns—Iraq and Afghanistan—could in time appear politically justified. To make a good case, one would have to argue that their long-term global diplomatic benefits (especially through their impact on Arab regimes) outweighed their immediate and ongoing human costs in Iraqi, US and other lives, plus the costs (or opportunity costs) to the United States. It is important to face the fact that the costs of asymmetric war will always be greater for the side using conventional forces than for the other side. The UK campaign against the IRA, or even the campaign in Malaya during the 1940s and 1950s, bear out that point.

The IRA tied up much of the British Army for 30 years and claimed only to have about 200 militants on active service at any one time. It is also worth looking at other recent campaigns bordering on the asymmetric, and also at the general theory behind the whole concept, to see how well it stands up to overall military experience so far. The invention of the term 'asymmetric war' probably arose from the fact that the three great global struggles of the twentieth century—the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War (which took the form of a Third World War)—were all quite symmetrical, in the sense that the two sides in each case were relatively equal in military capacity and had roughly similar weaponry, though not necessarily similar strategic doctrines. One only need think of the contrast between the German theory of *Blitzkrieg* and the French Maginot Line concept. Indeed, the first use of the asymmetric war concept that I have found comes from about the time when the notion of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) was becoming familiar in the late 1980s.

Despite there being a sort of intrinsic connection between the two, the idea of asymmetric warfare did not become widely used until the bombing in Aden Harbour of the USS *Cole* in 2000. Notable in that attack, and many others since, is that old military principle, economy of force. This means that, at the cost of just one small boat, some explosives, and two volunteers, it was possible to kill more US servicemen and damage more US naval assets than the whole of the Serbian Armed Forces had done in the Kosovo campaign the previous year.

We are not as yet anywhere near the end of the debate of whether the US strategy, as employed so far, is going to prove a successful counter to the jihadists' strategy—that is the overall jihadists' strategy and not necessarily just Iraq. Incidentally, we should always think of jihadists in the plural as a worldwide force, rather than thinking of individuals or particular groups as the problem. Osama bin Laden may have declared this war, but it is going to be a long war—it is going to long outlast both him and his lieutenants and even probably organisations such as al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). My view, in regard to the current US strategies, is that the invasion of Afghanistan was justified and on the whole has been successful at relatively modest military and diplomatic costs. Removing the Taliban regime has deprived the jihadists of a form of sponsoring government, training camps and established supply lines, and sent the leadership into hiding. By contrast, the invasion of Iraq seems to be to have proved too costly to be justified as a strategy.

One might have to reverse that assessment if it does prove (as the original sponsors and planners hoped) a means of transforming the Arab world—along the lines of the Domino Effect—to an area of democracy and peace. President Bush keeps saying that democracies never go to war with each other, but the evidence for that hopeful proposition is decidedly thin. A genuinely democratic Saudi Arabia, for instance, with a government produced by free and genuinely fair elections, might be actually a good deal less

cooperative with the United States than the present regime. However, only history can determine whether the optimists or the pessimists are right on this proposition.

The next question we should look at is how long this kind of warfare will remain the dominant preoccupation in world politics. My answer would be that it is likely to last as long as the present unipolar world—probably until about the late 2030s or early 2040s. If tempted to offer an historically neat pattern, I would be inclined to point out that the first Asian challenge to the United States in the Pacific (from Japan) was in 1941. It would be surprising if the second Asian challenge to the United States did not come from China in around 2041. Of course, history is seldom that neat, so such a prediction should not be taken too seriously. What must be taken seriously, however, is the prospect of a radical redistribution of power in the Asia Pacific region. This change is already underway, at an increasing speed, and it is transforming the part of the world that is Australia's area of primary strategic concern. This redistribution of power arises from very basic and inescapable realities, namely rates of population and economic growth. Another subtler non-material factor, which is also very important in this process, is the transformation of political consciousness by modern forms of communication. By mid-century, both China and India will have populations at about the billion and a half mark.[6] Their rates of economic growth are currently around 7 per cent (China's is sometimes much higher), but even a steady rate of economic growth at that level sees the national income double every 10 years. This rate of economic growth means, among other things, a lot more money for military goods and services such as the ability to fund research on advanced weaponry and the like.

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6 UN Population Division, *1997: World Population Prospects, 1950–2050*. The 1996 edition (Annex I and II) quoted in Gerhard K. Helig, *World Population Prospects: Analyzing the 1996 U.N. Population Projections*, available at <www.iiasa.ac.at/Research/LUC/Papers/ gkh1/Figc1_4.htm >.

This observation does not imply that either India or China will be the military equal of the United States, but rather that each will be a very formidable power. They will both be nuclear, of course, and their governments may be strongly nationalistic, as may many other Asian powers also of formidable size and potential capacity. Pakistan will reach a population of about 350 million, Indonesia about 300 million and Bangladesh will reach a similar size. Even Vietnam and the Philippines will be above the 100 million level. Australia will thus be living with a 'company of giants', not only as far as populations are concerned, but in many cases as far as their economic bases are concerned. These changes will in effect turn the current unipolar world of unchallenged US military ascendancy back into a multipolar world with several independent centres of power. The new independent centres of power will not in all cases be military powers, as the assets of each state will vary widely. In the case of the European Union, for instance, its power will be mostly economic and political. In the case of China, its power bases will be both economic and military. In the case of India, this will probably be economic, military and possibly (as with the European Union) also political. There will be a muddle of non-Western democracies in our part of the world. South Africa might have regional influence, having made some economic progress that would be the basis of its status among the powers. In Russia's case, there will still be its nuclear status along with what I would call Moscow's prospective diplomatic clout—a factor that, in an earlier balance of power system, was called the role of the balancer.

In the nineteenth century that role fell to Britain, but, later in this century, I think it is a role that probably will fall to Moscow. The evolution from a unipolar world to a multipolar world with as many as 12 great powers will have its advantages; yet one great disadvantage is that, as in the past, it will make conventional war between the great powers much more likely than at present. In addition, since at least seven (and probably more) of those powers will have nuclear

weapons, obviously the fear of nuclear war will increase and the doctrine of deterrence will have to be renovated for this new situation. Moreover, asymmetric war waged by non-state actors may still be with us, complicating the whole situation. This may seem an excessively pessimistic forecast, but it is my hope and expectation that the very magnitude of the dangers will force the governments concerned into a concert of powers that will find political and diplomatic solutions rather than military ones for the inevitable conflicts. The Prussian military and political thinker, Carl von Clausewitz, who lived during the last concert of powers period, after 1815, often seems to me eerily prescient about the twenty-first century:

> Time and chance shuffle the cards but in its significance war was only diplomacy somewhat intensified a more vigorous way of negotiation. If we only require from the enemy a small sacrifice then we content ourselves with aiming at a small equivalent by the war. Is not war another kind of writing and language for political thought? It has certainly a grammar of its own but its logic is not peculiar to itself.[7]

[7] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (eds and trans) Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984, Book VIII, Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

Operation *Helpem Fren*: A Personal Perspective

Ben McDevitt

Introduction

Operation *Helpem Fren* was the codename given to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). My involvement in the mission began with initial planning in the weeks before the first waves of police and military deployed to Solomon Islands on 24 July 2003. Subsequently, I served in Solomon Islands in the dual roles of Commander of the Participating Police Force (PPF) and as Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) until 1 August 2004. This experience was a great honour and privilege and, after living in Solomon Islands for a little over a year, I developed a deep affection for the country and its people. Before going any further, I should also acknowledge the loyalty and great respect I feel towards the many dedicated and committed police officers who remain in the RSIP and who persevered in their duties through years of neglect and intimidation before RAMSI.

RAMSI has had a profound impact upon the people of Solomon Islands by literally changing the course of their nation's history. While this chapter will consider the success of the mission up until mid-2005, I would also like to preface these remarks by noting that there is still a great deal of work to be done in Solomon Islands. The job remains a difficult and, at times, a very dangerous one. There have been assassination attempts on RAMSI personnel and, in May 2004, at

Manakwai village on Malu'u, North Malaita, shots were exchanged between RAMSI military forces and a criminal element. The second assassination attempt against RAMSI personnel (which, like the first in October 2004, was a cowardly ambush of a PPF patrol in Honiara) resulted in the shooting death of Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer Adam Dunning on 22 December 2004. While the mission has been incredibly successful, it is also necessary to remember the fragility of the peace created by RAMSI. There remains a critical need to address the complex causes of the underlying ethnic tensions that led to the breakdown of civil society in Solomon Islands during the mid- to late-1990s. Before proceeding, it is important to develop some context by describing the country and some of the recent history that led to the political, economic and social crisis to which RAMSI was the response.

Solomon Islands—geography, climate and historical background

Solomon Islands is located in the south-west Pacific. The Shortland Islands form the country's northern border, which is adjacent to the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. The islands of Choiseul, Santa Isabel and Malaita make up the remainder of the northern part of the Solomon chain, while New Georgia, Guadalcanal and Makira form the southern part, with the Santa Cruz Islands further to the east. In total, however, almost a thousand separate islands comprise the Solomon group, with the six major islands and many smaller ones forming a double chain that stretches for 1500 kilometres in a south-easterly direction from the Shortland group. The national capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal, which is about three and a half hours flying time from Brisbane. Guadalcanal is perhaps best known to most Australians as the focal point of the many sea and land battles fought during the Second World War, primarily between Japanese and American forces for the possession of the strategically located Henderson airfield.

Just a few degrees south of the equator, Solomon Islands has a tropical climate, with rugged mountain ranges and heavy jungle forming the major terrain features across most of the islands. Due to the geography of Solomon Islands, many of the communities are extremely remote—a factor that makes the delivery of services very difficult. The primary means of transport is by boat, with motor vehicle traffic mainly being confined to the major centres of Honiara, Auki and Gizo. The population of the islands is about 500 000 and growing at a rate around 3.5 per cent per annum. The rate of population growth is high and of increasing concern because of the pressure its places on both natural resources and the demands for services. Melanesians make up the majority of the population; however, there are also pockets of Polynesians and Gilbertese, particularly on some of the outer islands. Religion plays a significant role in the life of the people. More than 95 per cent of the population is Christian, with the remainder following customary beliefs. In some places Christianity is practised alongside traditional beliefs of magic and ancestor worship. Over 80 languages are spoken in the country. On numerous occasions, particularly on the rugged island of Malaita, a five-minute helicopter flight from one village to the next would mean that RAMSI personnel needed a different interpreter.

Solomon Islands was a British protectorate from 1893 until 7 July 1978, nearly 30 years ago, when the nation achieved independence. Since that time, for a variety of reasons, standards of living have deteriorated to the extent that social indicators are among the lowest in the Pacific. Unemployment remains very high, with approximately 90 per cent of the population following a rural subsistence lifestyle. Almost all export earnings are derived from primary products, particularly timber, fish, palm oil, copra and cocoa. Over recent years, Solomon Islands' economy became dependent on the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and a succession of budget deficits. There was very little capital investment, few development projects or

employment generation schemes and basic infrastructure such as roads and electricity supply were eroded.

Ethnic tensions

Urban drift to the national capital, Honiara, throughout the 1990s exacerbated unemployment and other social problems, further heightening tensions between various ethnic groups. In particular, friction between the inhabitants of Guadalcanal and Malaita over issues such as land, internal migration and compensation claims led to numerous outbreaks of violence and criminality. At the height of this conflict some 20 000 Malaitans were forced, through fear and intimidation, to flee their homes in Guadalcanal and return to Malaita. Dispossessed and aggrieved youths took up arms and clashes between rival groups became commonplace.

Prior to RAMSI, Solomon Islands was a troubled nation in a steady state of decline that met all the indicators of a 'failing state'. Honiara was under the sway of armed criminal elements. In more remote areas there was a state of virtual civil war, in which self-proclaimed warlords and thugs with guns created no-go zones where they committed horrific crimes at will.

These groups were largely unopposed by an almost totally ineffective police force that was riddled with corruption and frequently exacerbated the situation by forming alliances with opposing groups based on wantok loyalties.[1] In some cases, the police provided arms and ammunition to militants directly from the RSIP armoury. The

[1] The wantok system is a complex web of reciprocal obligations based mostly on ethnic identity and language (hence the name 'wantok', which is pisin or pidgin English for the same language). In Solomon Islands, the interaction of traditional Melanesian systems of social organisation (such as wantok), the country's colonial history and the post-independence decline of the national government, promoted vertical linkages of patronage that reinforced the negative effects of the wantok system.

national government, paralysed by fear, and deeply compromised by its own connections and dependence upon some of the armed groups, was reduced to rubber stamping outrageous demands for ‘compensation’ from parties claiming to have been wronged. Police officers were also often involved in exacting huge sums of cash at gunpoint from a beleaguered national Treasury. Money destined for provincial development programs and normal services such as hospitals and schools was squandered by the thieves and thugs who were virtually ruling Honiara. At village level, people found themselves without even the most basic of services. The spiral of economic decline was directly related to law and order problems. The normal social welfare responsibilities of government, particularly in the areas of health and education, were almost entirely reliant on aid funds from the international donor community and church groups. By mid-2003, the situation had deteriorated to the point where the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Sir Allan Kemakeza, heading a weak and divided government that was also essentially bankrupt, wrote to the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, asking for assistance.

The RAMSI concept of operations

Planning assumptions

Planning for the mission was based upon several underlying assumptions that developed out of the initial government-to-government discussions between Australia and Solomon Islands. These ideas were further refined through three high-level scoping visits to Solomon Islands prior to the formal arrival of RAMSI personnel on 24 July 2003. These early planning assumptions proved to be the key ingredients for the success of the mission in its first two years.

It is important to recall that the RAMSI deployment followed a request for assistance by the Government of Solomon Islands. Moreover, the majority of its citizens wholeheartedly supported the

request for assistance. These two key factors, along with careful management, have ensured that the mission began with, and has maintained, the overwhelming support of the population. Evidence of this support could be seen in the incredible reception at Honiara International Airport on 24 July 2003 when thousands of cheering Solomon Islanders greeted the constant stream of Royal Australian Air Force C-130 Hercules transports and charter aircraft bringing in the police, soldiers and civilian specialists. Soldiers on the first planes had disembarked in defensive postures, but quickly sensed the mood of the population and shouldered weapons in order to wave to elated crowds. Even before the arrival of RAMSI personnel, the first illegal firearms had been handed in and stolen cars suddenly appeared in their owners' yards overnight.

One of the greatest challenges for the mission will be to continue to maintain the high level of support of the majority of the Solomon's population. One obvious barometer of the ongoing level of public support for RAMSI is the monitoring of newspaper editorials and comments from the man in the street and the woman in the village. The friendly smiles and waves of school children walking to re-opened schools at the sight of a passing RAMSI vehicle is another less scientific, but equally demonstrable, sign of continued support. I recall saying on many occasions that when the kids stop waving to us, we need to reassess what we are doing and how we are doing it.

The second factor contributing to the mission's success was the possession of a strong mandate. The passing of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 by the Parliament of Solomon Islands, prior to the arrival of the mission, enabled almost 2000 soldiers and 300 police to arrive legally empowered to commence the immediate restoration of security and law and order. During the planning phase, there was some debate about how large and visible the military presence needed to be in order to fulfil its dual roles of protection of the PPF and logistical support to the mission. One can

now say that arriving with the support of a significant military force has enhanced the success of the mission in a number of ways. The earlier experience of the International Peace Monitoring Team, an international effort in the Solomons from November 2000 to June 2002, had demonstrated the futility of a peace mission without 'teeth'. On that occasion, police had been limited to monitoring and reporting incidents, and were not empowered to act against crimes being perpetrated in front of them. It was interesting to see numbers of AFP and New Zealand police officers who had served with the International Peace Monitoring Team returning to Solomon Islands with RAMSI to address what they described as 'unfinished business'. Empowering an intervention force with a strong mandate often draws criticism over a range of sovereignty issues but, for the villager at the grass roots level, the notion of sovereignty takes a distant second place to daily survival. There is also an argument that in such cases sovereignty is not taken from but actually restored to the host nation.

A third critical factor in the mission's success has involved the multinational and multidisciplinary character of the mission. Operationally, RAMSI is a police-led mission, a feature that is something of a novelty in itself. The mission brought together a mix of police, military and civilian expertise that was not only able to deliver security and law and order, but also simultaneously to provide significant peace dividends such as development and nation-building. The role played by Nick Warner, a seasoned diplomat from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as the mission's civilian Special Coordinator, greatly enhanced the human face of the mission and ensured its success.

The importance of regional partners

In addition to being multidisciplinary, RAMSI includes personnel from 10 regional partners: Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, New Zealand and Australia.

This diversity, along with the support of the Pacific Islands Forum, has strengthened the legitimacy of the mission by demonstrating the high level of regional commitment to its success. While some nations have contributed only limited resources, their efforts on the ground show that the commitment is not just about numbers or symbolism. RAMSI is about doing something to help a neighbour and it was a great source of pleasure for me to nominate the pidgin words 'Helpem Fren' as the mission's operational title.

Operation phases

The planning phase of the mission made use of the excellent facilities at the AFP's Wangaralli Nurrumbai Centre at Majura in the Australian Capital Territory. The centre now houses the AFP's International Deployment Group, but in mid-2003 it was used to bring together planners from the main agencies involved in the mission—Defence, the AFP, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and AusAID. The aim of these sessions was to come up with a consolidated view of where we were going and what we were trying to achieve. There were some interesting meetings and a great deal was learnt about various organisational cultures and the differences in such basics as the language and terminology used by Canberra's bureaucracies. A good example of these differences involved priority setting and the understanding of the duration of the mission. Some members on the whole-of-government planning team were thinking that the mission would only be 'in country' a matter of days prior to its withdrawal. Others were planning in months and years for achievement of specific goals, while those focused on aspects such as nation-building rightly argued that success could not be judged until Solomon Islands could stand on its own feet, which would probably take decades to achieve.

The end product of these deliberations was a plan encompassing three phases: commencement, consolidation and final. The commencement phase focused on immediate tactical and operational issues such as

establishing a presence in the country, winning back the streets of Honiara from the criminal elements, commencing investigations, neutralising the self-proclaimed warlords and collecting illegal firearms. The second phase was aimed at addressing the issue of consolidation of rule of law in the country, so as to enable the essential nation-building work to get underway. The final phase, as the name implies, was about ensuring the sustainability and self-reliance of Solomon Islands and paving the way for a return to normal bilateral relationships. Given the importance of the commencement phase in terms of establishing credibility and acceptance of the mission in the eyes of the people of Solomon Islands, much of the remainder of this chapter will focus on key events in those early days.

Prior to leaving Canberra for Townsville, the jump-off point for the operation, a number of ‘desk-top’ exercises were conducted. These exercises involved a series of ‘what if’ scenarios that included all the government agencies, but particularly the small group of RAMSI Principals—the leaders of the police, military and development teams—coordinated by Nick Warner. The aim of the exercises was to determine what we would like to achieve on each day of the mission’s first week. For example, on the day of our arrival, one of the objectives included initiating joint unarmed PPF and RSIP foot patrols on the streets of Honiara. This move was necessary to demonstrate that a viable police presence was henceforth going to be in place to ensure the safety of citizens. The foot patrols were also symbolically important to show that the PPF was in the country to support and work with the RSIP and not as a totally separate entity. Of course, to have unarmed police showing the friendly face of policing in Honiara meant that simultaneously there was a need to provide mobile patrols of armed police to act as backup. Indeed, because of the types of weapons available to the militant gangs that had controlled the streets before the arrival of the mission, it was also necessary to have a robust military response at close call. Detailed planning and cooperation were required to get these arrangements up and working so quickly.

As a result of these exercises, it was possible to launch the first joint RSIP/PPF foot patrol within 100 minutes of arrival 'in country'. I went to the Central police station in Honiara to look for an RSIP officer to take part in a foot patrol of the town's main marketplace. As the station's front desk was unmanned, I went to where the watch house and prisoner cells were located. There I found a person, wearing a singlet and blue trousers, hosing blood out of the cells. I told him who I was and asked if he had a police uniform shirt. He scurried away and re-emerged a couple of minutes later with a sergeant's shirt that he hurriedly buttoned on as I introduced him to the AFP officer who was to accompany him on the foot patrol. This simple act, while obviously a form of beat policing which the particular RSIP officer had not done for some time, was important both practically and symbolically in order to demonstrate to the people of Solomon Islands that the status quo was changing. Gratifyingly, images of the RSIP officer and his AFP counterpart walking around the markets together on the day of our arrival were subsequently beamed around the world.

Protective security

Another important activity on that first day, conducted prior to mounting the joint police patrols, was a visit to the office of the Prime Minister to discuss his Close Personal Protection (CPP). Following very brief consultation, those thugs engaged in providing physical protection for Sir Allan Kemakeza were replaced by uniformed police officers trained in CPP tasks. Also replaced, by members of the AFP Protective Services, was the ragtag assortment of RSIP and their wantoks who guarded the Prime Minister's residence and office. These actions were vital because, in the lead up to the arrival of RAMSI, there was considerable resistance from both groups and individuals who saw that their corrupt practices would probably end. Resistance to the coming of RAMSI took the form of threats and intimidation aimed at the Prime Minister. Fearing that the Prime Minister might be killed, the RSIP Commissioner decided to conceal

him until the mission arrived. When I spoke to the Prime Minister on 25 July 2003, one day after his new CPP team had taken up duty, he beamed from ear to ear, saying that he had just had the best night's sleep in years.

Extending the influence of the mission beyond Honiara

The main presence of RAMSI was established at a site known as the Guadalcanal Beach Resort, which in reality was anything but a resort. Even as the mission consolidated itself at this location, there were already plans to establish additional police posts beyond Honiara. While it was crucial to secure a presence in known hotspots such as the Weathercoast and Malaita, where most of the fighting had occurred, there was also a keen sense that all Solomon Islanders across the country's nine provinces needed to feel that RAMSI was there for everyone. Many people in the outer provinces had suffered incredible hardships throughout the years of the ethnic tensions. In numerous places, no goods or services had ever reached the villages; yet, in other instances, villages had been subjected to raids by marauding gangs.

Day 14 of the mission saw the first police post outside of Honiara opened at Avu Avu on the Weathercoast. Three days later another police post opened at Auki, in Malaita and, by day 28, there were six more posts established in three provinces. By day 100 of the operation, there were 16 police posts across all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. Just prior to the first anniversary of RAMSI a seventeenth police post was opened at Lofung on the border with Papua New Guinea. The creation of these posts in such a short period of time was an incredible achievement, particularly when each post establishment needed to be preceded by significant negotiations with local chiefs and elders, political representatives and rival militia commanders. In addition, this task presented a logistical nightmare, especially when it required the building of police stations in incredibly

remote areas of dense jungle with little local infrastructure and under very adverse climatic conditions.

Great credit must be given to the military component of the mission for running the logistic support in such a difficult environment. At the newly constructed police post in Maluu I spoke with exhausted Army engineers who had constructed a complete building, including office facilities and living quarters, in just 12 days. To achieve this result, they had not only worked 18-hour days, but also managed to build up a great relationship with the local people. Initially, Lieutenant Colonel John Frewen, the commander of the military contingent, had agreed with me to establish nine police posts across the country. He managed to retain his sense of humour when told after only a few weeks on the ground that there had been a miscalculation and the requirement was 17 posts. The success of the mission is deeply indebted to the military for such excellent support in this aspect of the operation.

As a final word on the posts, it is worth noting that, of the 17 posts established, seven were what came to be called ‘accompanied’ posts. This term meant that a risk assessment had determined that it was too dangerous to send police into an area without also having a full-time military presence. This was another requirement that drew heavily on the resources of the Army, because an ‘accompanied’ post consisted of two PPF officers and over a platoon of soldiers. In these locations there was the added ability for the police and a team of soldiers to trek through the jungle to isolated villages and deliver policing services. The police posts became critical, not only in terms of delivering these policing services, but also by acting as a network for the delivery of RAMSI’s public relations strategies. The posts became a focal point for interaction between local people and the police and military personnel attached to that area. They provided such an excellent conduit for getting consistent messages out across the country that police posts have now become a central gathering place for people to meet and discuss problems. The posts also coordinate sporting and

community events and provide a place where villagers can go to read the *Solomon Star* newspaper which, at the time of the operation, was usually full of information about RAMSI operations and where the mission was heading.

Engagement with the key militant groups

The police posts also provided RAMSI with a base in the stronghold areas of the key militant groups from which it was possible to progressively negotiate with the various factions in order to get them to lay down their arms. Major factions included the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF) and the Isatabu Freedom Movement, both of which were running military style campaigns against each other on the Weathercoast. Another was the Central Neutral Force, which occupied tracts of land in central Guadalcanal and was headed by Stanley Kaoni who also used the alias of 'Satan'. Another major group was the Malaitan Eagle Force, with strongholds located in Auki and Maluu on Malaita and strong affiliations with rogue police. The Malaitan Eagle Force was responsible for much of the criminality being committed in and around Honiara.

The engagements with the militant groups on the Weathercoast were of particular importance, as there had been a virtual civil war raging there for some time. The task of securing the Weathercoast and disarming the rival warlords there was among the highest priorities to ensure the success of RAMSI. The three RAMSI principals probably travelled to the Weathercoast no fewer than 60 times during the first year of the mission, talking with hundreds of villagers, chiefs and elders and bringing the RAMSI messages to the people at the grass roots level. During these visits, we also attended numerous traditional reconciliation ceremonies facilitated through the police posts. In these ceremonies, opposing villages brokered tentative peace agreements and exchanged custom gifts. One of the most sensitive issues in Solomon Islands that still requires careful management involves

reconciling traditional custom law with the criminal justice system administered by the central government.

Day 21 of the mission—the arrest of Harold Keke

When asked to nominate the most significant day in the first year of Operation *Helpem Fren*, RAMSI Special Coordinator Nick Warner is quick to reply Day 21, 13 August 2003. This was the day on which Harold Keke, self-proclaimed warlord and head of the GLF, surrendered and was formally arrested aboard HMAS *Manoora*. Keke's arrest, arguably the most significant made during the operation, was also the first arrest made by the PPF. Harold Keke had gained a well-earned reputation throughout Solomon Islands as a vicious and cold-blooded killer who had established a no-go zone across a large area of the Weathercoast and refused to negotiate with the government. Rumours and stories added to the hysteria created by the horrific deeds allegedly committed by Keke and, to many people, he was seen as a demon.

I wrote my first letter to Harold Keke before leaving Canberra. In the letter I introduced myself and spoke about the mandate of RAMSI and requested a face-to-face meeting. In the following weeks there was frequent correspondence between us, the letters being collected by a member of the GLF who travelled from the Weathercoast to Honiara by small boat. At one point, just a few days after the arrival of RAMSI, this 'courier' was identified in Honiara by anti-GLF thugs who chased him and beat him up. He managed to escape from the thugs only to be arrested by the RSI Police and locked up. This affair then developed into a bit of a 'Keystone cops' exercise when it became necessary to employ PPF members to negotiate the release of the courier from RSIP so he could deliver the next letter to Keke. After this experience, the courier refused to return to Honiara and from then on he was met at a location in the jungle on the outskirts of the town.

On the Weathercoast, Harold Keke's influence was as profound as his methods were brutal. In one raid he destroyed a village. The 400 residents of the village were held at gunpoint, while Keke took two young boys, stripped them naked and beat them to death in front of the villagers. Their bodies were then tied to the hands of the local priest. Finally, Keke and his followers burnt down all the houses in the village. Only the little chapel was left standing because Keke was quite religious. Harold Keke eventually agreed to a face-to-face meeting with the three RAMSI Principals—Special Coordinator Nick Warner, Lieutenant Colonel John Frewen and myself. After a few of these meetings, which took place in a small church at Mbiti village, a place of Keke's choosing, he finally surrendered and laid down his arms on the morning of 13 August 2003. As he said his good-byes to hundreds of his followers on the beach at Mbiti, many were in tears and visibly distressed. Many of these people had seen Keke as their protector and believed that his surrender would see them fall prey to other warlords who had been terrorising the Weathercoast. Indeed, Keke's authority was such that, once in detention at a temporary remand facility built at the Guadalcanal Beach resort, the PPF were able to use him to write letters to other GLF members on the Weathercoast who were accused of serious criminal acts. In this way, it was possible to affect many dozens of what I call 'arrests by appointment' of suspects who would otherwise probably still be at large in the jungles of Guadalcanal.

I am convinced that if Harold Keke had not peacefully surrendered, it would have been necessary to insert significant military resources into the Weathercoast region in order to capture him. The great difficulty associated with that option was that Keke knew every inch of the incredibly difficult terrain and had a large number of well-armed supporters. It is almost certain that RAMSI would have suffered casualties if it had become necessary to arrest Keke by force. On the day of Keke's arrest, his second-in-command Ronnie Cawa and a number of other key GLF personnel were also taken into custody.

Some weeks later, after further investigations in which witness and confessional statements had been obtained, we realised the value of the other men who had been detained when Keke was arrested. Finally, on the day that Keke was arrested, as agreed in the negotiations, there was a formal ceremony at Mbiti in which members of the GLF surrendered to RAMSI 40 high-powered firearms, 28 of which were military style weapons. These weapons were destroyed on site in front of villagers and those GLF members in attendance.

The weapon amnesty

The destruction of the GLF's weapons at Mbiti was part of a process conducted across the country to collect weapons from the various factions and the public. The eradication of weapons, either seized or surrendered voluntarily, was important to the success of RAMSI. A central strategy in disarming the groups was the declaration of a 21-day amnesty. During this period, people could surrender weapons to RAMSI or to the RSIP without being prosecuted for possession of those firearms. Another element of the strategy involved destroying the weapons in front of the people who had surrendered them. This action ensured that it would not be necessary to guard those storage facilities vulnerable to attack. It was also a means of building trust with those who laid down their arms, as the destruction of weapons frequently occurred at large public events that took on the character of ceremonial occasions.

Those who surrendered weapons gained a deal of attention and respect from fellow Solomon Islanders and were assured that no ballistics examination would be conducted of any firearm surrendered during the amnesty period. Incentives to surrender weapons were also complemented by a significant disincentive for those who might seek to retain them. This disincentive took the form of some very tough legislation that would be applied to any person found in possession of a firearm after the 21-day amnesty period. The legislation, which was

passed swiftly, included penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine of $25 000 for anyone caught with an illegal weapon. As a result of these measures, a total of 3730 weapons were collected during the first year of the operation, with all but five of these being surrendered during the amnesty period. In addition to the weapons, over 300 000 rounds of ammunition were also collected.

The amnesty did not succeed in collecting all the guns. The death of AFP Officer Adam Dunning and other shooting incidents prove that at least some weapons were cached. Certain individuals had made a choice to cache weapons in the hope that RAMSI would eventually leave the country. However, it is very likely that many of those same people who buried guns have been unable to access them due to their own subsequent incarceration in Rove prison. There are, however, two indicators that permit some confidence to be drawn from the large numbers of firearms collected during the amnesty that firearms are certainly not as readily available as they once were. One of these factors is that two assessments of the number of guns in circulation, conducted prior to our arrival in the country, both came up with total figures that were lower than the numbers of weapons actually collected. The second factor is that, other than the incidents discussed above, since the end of the amnesty, firearms have not been a feature of crimes committed in Solomon Islands. This is an extraordinary achievement when you consider the countless acts of murder, robbery and intimidation committed with guns in the four or five years prior to the arrival of RAMSI on 24 July 2003.

Investigations

The apprehension of Harold Keke and his key henchmen was followed by a series of arrests of key militants and their followers. In the first 12 months of Operation *Helpem Fren*, a total of 3390 arrests were made and 4900 criminal charges were laid. While some of these charges related to minor crimes and street offences that were laid as

part of restoring basic law and order, the most prevalent charge preferred by the major crime investigation teams was murder, closely followed by abduction. One of the most massive investigations in the South Pacific is still ongoing, involving over 50 bodies already exhumed from numerous gravesites on the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal. A significant number of criminal trials are also underway. The most significant arrests had to be timed in order to ensure that RAMSI was not seen to be favouring any particular group—from time to time claims of this nature were made against the mission. Considerable time was also spent studying and discussing the flow-on effects, especially any possible political implications from these arrests. The wave of arrests, like the criminality itself, had an impact across the whole of Solomon Islands society. To date, these high profile arrests have included all of the self-proclaimed warlords (and enough of their respective hierarchies to render the groups largely ineffective), the ombudsman, a magistrate, lawyers, numerous police, public servants, corrections officers and even two serving government ministers. From the outset, there was significant pressure on RAMSI to show that the mission was not a pawn of the Government of Solomon Islands. There were, and still are, numerous calls to arrest the so-called ‘big fish’ whom the population at large believe to be guilty of official corruption, amongst other things. Many hours were spent explaining, on Solomon Islands national radio and at public meetings, the practical realities of gathering evidence to substantiate corruption allegations.

Rebuilding the police service

One area where RAMSI demonstrated that no one was above the law was in the very vigorous and very public cleansing of the RSIP. The RSIP had lost the trust, respect and confidence of the people and there was a need to demonstrate to the public that serious steps were being taken to clean it up. In the first year of Operation *Helpem Fren*, over 400 officers were removed from the RSIP. In some cases individual

officers made the choice to leave the police service themselves, perhaps anticipating or witnessing what was happening around them. A number of other officers had the decision to separate from the force made for them and they were dismissed from the service. A total of 74 serving officers were arrested and charged with serious criminal offences and several are now serving lengthy prison sentences. These arrests included officers from all ranks, up to and including the two RSIP Deputy Commissioners.

Rebuilding a police service, however, is not merely about locking up or sacking corrupt officers: it is also about rebuilding the organisational culture and philosophy of the service. This task involves extensive community consultation about the values a community expects from the police and what services it wants the police to deliver. It is also a process that requires the identification of the true champions of the police service and the cultivation of those members in leadership positions that will take the force into the future.

To achieve this goal, a strategic review of the RSIP was established based on 15 terms of reference. In reality, every aspect of policing conducted by the RSIP was placed under the microscope and working groups of experts came up with a range of recommendations, many of which were rapidly implemented. The recommendations of the strategic review included revised recruitment standards for the RSIP and a new training regime that requires all new recruits to undertake tertiary studies as part of their training. New relationships have been established with institutions, such as the Australian Federal Police College, the New Zealand Police Academy and the Australian Institute of Police Management. Shortly before I left Solomon Islands, I had the pleasure of addressing the first wave of new RSIP recruits brought in under the new regime. Of the 30 latest recruits, 16 are female and the new officers represent all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. This statistic is a far cry from the recruitment practices of

earlier years that saw the ethnic representation of the RSIP, particularly at higher ranks, become dominated by a single minority group.

While my chapter has focused primarily on the police service, significant work was also being undertaken to rebuild other public and private sector institutions in Solomon Islands. However, this account has demonstrated that the establishment of the rule of law is central to the rebuilding of a shattered country and shows how important an effective and trusted police service is to the rule of law. In a little over a year, Solomon Islands experienced a remarkable change in its destiny. Rampant criminality was checked after some 3000 arrests and the seizure of thousands of illegally-held weapons. The important work of eliminating corruption and graft from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force was well advanced, and the RSIP was set on the road to regaining the trust and confidence of the citizens of Solomon Islands.

Conclusion

Successes in security and law enforcement paved the way for the critical task of nation-building to occur. The return of the rule of law resulted in travel warnings for overseas visitors being dropped. The placement of foreign in-line advisors in Treasury and the Finance Department has seen financial procedures regularised and a degree of accountability restored. For the first time in years, a responsible budget was brought down by the Solomon Islands Government and provincial premiers received grants to enable them to address local priorities. In addition, public servants across the country were able to receive their pay on time. As a result of these reforms, international financial institutions re-engaged with Solomon Islands, arrears to the World Bank were met and evidence of reconstruction and return of foreign investment were visible. With positive economic indicators, development donors are now able to move freely around the almost

1000 islands of the Solomon group to deliver development aid to those most in need.

RAMSI is unique in many ways. Throughout the first year of the mission, Solomon Islands was visited by academics and strategists from around the world who were curious about the factors that produced such a success. The formula employed in RAMSI was right for the mission at a particular point in time. The same formula will not necessarily yield the same success somewhere else in the future. The road to recovery is a long one but, as the saying goes, 'if you want peace, work for justice'. There is still much to be done and there will be spills and hurdles but, so long as RAMSI continues to listen and learn from the wonderful people of Solomon Islands, both parties will forever be richer for the experience.

Chapter 3

From Madrid to Manila: Aspects of Terrorism in South-East Asia

Marites Vitug

Introduction

From Madrid to Manila, from Morocco to Indonesia, terrorism is a phenomenon with which we all have to grapple and one thing is clear: the rules of engagement are ambiguous. Attacks are unpredictable and calculated to jolt us suddenly. Journalists are finding this issue quite a difficult beat to cover. Information sources are limited, we rely on intelligence reports written by military forces from around the region, and then we look for other sources to corroborate this information—if we can find them. Unlike an intelligence organisation, a journalist cannot follow a terrorist by tracking their cell phone, but the confessions and testimonies of arrested suspects are proving to be a rich information source that helps us to begin to understand the phenomenon of terrorism. This chapter considers the threat of terror in South-East Asia from the point of view of a journalist—someone who has been trying to watch, understand and monitor this complicated issue for some time. Of course, journalists do not want to cover all the forms of conflict that are now defined as terrorism and this chapter will focus on those ideas and issues that have helped the author to write about the subject. There are five sections: each deals with a specific issue or idea, but all are interrelated. The conclusion reached is that terrorism, for all its devastating effects and extensive impact, is highly nuanced.

Terrorism has many facets, it is not as black and white as a leader calling the shots from a cave in Afghanistan and directing members of sleeper cells to activate and conduct an attack. In South-East Asia,

terrorism thrives on domestic issues, social discontent, feelings of exclusion and desire to preserve an Islamic heritage. However, terrorism is not just al-Qaeda, JI, Abu Sayyaf (the extremist group in Southern Philippines) or the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (the main rebel group in the Philippines). Terrorism cuts across organisations and members of these various groups can work together to commit terrorist acts, yet their final goals may not be identical. Some pursue terrorism for local ends, others in the name of a pan-Islamic state. In this complex environment, there are many ways to counter the threat of terrorism—from investment in social and economic development to intelligence sharing. All of these issues will be discussed, but first let me begin with some history.

A new breed of terrorists

In 1995, after Philippine Government agents discovered a plot by terrorists to bomb American commercial planes travelling from Aceh to the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) wrote a confidential report defining the new breed of terrorists. The terrorists discovered in Manila were the same people behind the first bombing of the WTC in New York in 1993. In essence, the FBI said that there was a new generation of terrorists that challenged traditional concepts of Middle Eastern terrorism and posed significant new difficulties for security services. This conclusion was based on the realisation that this new breed of terrorists could attack anywhere at any time.

The FBI report gave a description of the new terrorists that holds to this day. Here are excerpts from the report:

> The new terrorists are autonomous, they operate in cells and each is given considerable autonomy. They are not hierarchical nor bureaucratic. In some cases certain cells are only known to a few members of the group's leadership. Decisions on one facet of a group's operation will be entirely under the authority of an

> individual who does not have a voice in the operations of other departments. Of course they are transnational and mobile, we've seen this in 1993 in the World Trade Center bombing how Ramzi Ahmed Yousef's ability to enter the US, establish a support structure, recruit a team and successfully carry out an attack.
>
> Yousef was able to use his friends and associates in foreign countries to identify possible targets. They cross economic classes. All the men of the supporters and members of this Islamic terrorist group come from poor economic backgrounds. At least in the Philippines and in parts of South East Asia. They draw support from educated Muslims who came of age after the Middle East wars of 1967 and 1973. As college students they became active in Islamic groups and recruited members disaffected with Arab socialism and Nasrism. Of course these extremists looked at a religious figure for spiritual guidance and there is a very strong link to Afghanistan.[1]

Most of the rebels, at least the MILF rebels whom I have interviewed in the Southern Philippines, have experience in Afghanistan, a common factor with rebels in other Islamic countries. In its report, the FBI described Afghanistan as 'the arena for paramilitary and terrorist training. Hundreds or perhaps thousands of Arab radicals and extremists travelled to Afghanistan to participate in the jihad against the Soviet Union'. On the basis of that account, there should have been great concern to ensure that no second Afghanistan training ground could ever develop, but from the perspective of 2005 it seems that Iraq is already fulfilling that role.

The FBI report continued describing the terrorists and their networks as

> indigenous groups, not strongly influenced by one nation and neither are they surrogates. They are not dependent on one source for weapons, money or political support. One common thread is that they are anti-US and anti-West, this unifies them especially in opposition to US and Western policies in the Middle East and toward Muslims. They have of course a world-wide network of support and they depend on various sources for funding, training and safe haven. This enhances their ability to operate in any geographic region.

1 Original in author's possession.

Two schools of thought

The terrorist attacks of the past 10 years, especially those post–11 September 2001, have conformed to the pattern noted by the FBI in 1995. With this in mind, there are now two schools of thought developing on terrorism. The first is that terror activities are centrally planned by al-Qaeda, which directs operations through various affiliated organisations such as JI in South-East Asia. In this school of thought, al-Qaeda or JI operatives infiltrate local groups and influence them to take up a broader agenda. The second school of thought believes that local groups join forces with JI or al-Qaeda but not on an institutional or organisational level. There is a convergence of interest, but only on a tactical level. The two groups may undertake certain activities together, but they do not share a common strategic goal. A local group may also earn or raise funds from an arrangement with JI or al-Qaeda.

Judging from the behaviour of terrorist groups in South-East Asia, the second school of thought seems to be more accurate, especially in the Philippines. As an illustration of these relationships, there is the case study of an Indonesian terrorist called Rohmat, age 25, alias Zaki, who was arrested in the Philippines in March 2005. Rohmat said that, in 2000, he was sent by JI to be its liaison officer with Abu Sayyaf and that his duties included training its new recruits. The money for these activities allegedly came from JI and was given to Abu Sayyaf's leaders, who in turn gave part of the money to the leader of the MILF which was tasked with carrying out bombings.

From a regional perspective, this is a very complex set of relationships in which the various countries in South-East Asia all have their special roles. Intelligence officials in Manila say that the Southern Philippines is the training ground as well as the source of firearms and explosives for JI.

There is certainly an abundant supply of firearms in the Southern Philippines due to the decade long secessionist rebellion. As for the other regional countries: Indonesia is the main battlefield; Malaysia is the source of money; and Thailand is an expansion site for JI. Reports of foreign militants being trained in MILF camps in Southern Philippines could also reflect complex financial arrangements. The MILF has the physical space and the camps to carry out this role. About two years ago, I visited one of the smaller camps of the MILF after they had lost their main base. In the camp I saw a makeshift obstacle course, fox holes, and huts. Of course, I did not see any Indonesians or Malaysians training there because the visit was pre-arranged, but it raises the question of how these links between Islamic militant groups developed.

International networks

To find an answer, we again need to look at recent history. Hundreds of Filipino Muslims have studied in Islamic countries and they have formed an international network bound by personal and religious ties. They can be compared to an alumni association, especially a military school alumni association. In July 2001, about 50 Filipino Muslims were reported by Russian intelligence to have been in war-ravaged Afghanistan at a place near Kabul. These Filipinos were not alone; they had attended Madrassahs (Islamic religious schools) in Pakistan and crossed over into Afghanistan, where they joined a Taliban-led multinational force of Arabs, Egyptian, Sudanese, Yemenis, Pakistanis and others. Hundreds of Filipinos have now become part of this network of young idealistic Muslims from all over the world who found just cause, initially in the Mujahideen's battle against the Russians but most recently in supporting the Taliban state in Afghanistan. This international network is said to be funded by Osama bin Laden, as well as some Islamic charitable organisations. Many of

its members have attended religious schools in Pakistan and other Islamic countries before ending up in Afghanistan, while others have headed there directly. Some Filipino Muslims opted to stay behind and eventually joined the Taliban or trained with them. It was Osama bin Laden who set up these training camps in Afghanistan in 1996.

When I was writing a book on the MILF, I interviewed the chairman of the MILF, who is now deceased. During the interview, the chairman told me that Afghanistan is their centre; that is, the centre of Islamic revolutionaries. In the 1980s more than 600 fighters from the MILF trained there and fought in the war against the Russians, ironically using advanced US-made weapons. Their camps were subjected to intense artillery attacks and a number of them were killed. He described to me the conditions, which were very difficult because of the savage winter and extremely hard summer. The training regime involved both combat and prayer. For these Filipino Muslims, the experience was the epitome of military and Islamic training during which they came, as he told me, 'to understand Islam completely'. Some stayed for months, while others completed a three-year course. A core group from Abu Sayyaf reportedly trained in Afghanistan as well.

Since the 1980s, many young Filipino Muslims have been trekking to Pakistan to study Islam and train to be leaders. The Saudi Arabia–based World Assembly of Muslim Youth funded several of these courses. Part of the course was a trip to Peshawar on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was the home of the anti-Soviet resistance. There the Filipinos saw the hard life, the arid soil, the barren surroundings and the poverty and misery of their fellow Muslims. For impressionable Filipino Muslims, who had experienced neglect and injustice in their own country, this exposure had a radicalising effect.

One Filipino Muslim recounted to me his experience while attending a short course on Islamic Dawa (*Dawa* is an Arabic word which means 'call') in Islamabad in the 1990s. He said that he was part of a group funded by a Muslim charitable organisation. An impromptu speaker came to address the course and, among others topics, talked about how Islam as a way of life was being threatened culturally by the immoral civilisation of the West. The speaker also explained how Islam was threatened physically by the invasion of the Hindus against the Kashmiri Muslims and by the Soviet attack on the Afghan Muslims. The speaker was dressed in a camouflage USMC-issue jacket worn over a Pakistani *salwar kameez* suit. He offered to give the students a hands-on experience in jihad if they came to Peshawar. From Peshawar, expert guides would take them into the mountains and then deep into Afghan territory near the battle front. In Afghanistan, the students would be given the option to fight alongside the Mujahideen, to observe the war up close, or avail themselves of basic guerrilla training in safer areas within the country. The proposed trip did not take place, but the Filipino Muslim student was surprised to learn years later that the speaker was none other than Osama bin Laden. He saw bin Laden's photograph characterised as a terrorist and he remembered that day in Islamabad, many years ago, when this man who looked so harmless had spoken to them.

Among Filipino Muslims, and I think this is also true with others in the region, seeking an Islamic education abroad is a common aspiration because of the prestige it confers. Overseas scholarships funded by Muslim countries and institutions began in the 1950s. The trend continued into the late 1970s when the government of Egypt, as part of the pan-Islamic programs of Gamal Abdul Nasser, granted hundreds of scholarships to young Filipino Muslims. In the 1980s, the centres of Islamic learning shifted to countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The main difference today is that Filipino Muslims enrol in short-term courses in Pakistani Madrassahs rather than seeking a university education in Egypt. The influence of conservative Islamic

education on foreign students is vast. Moreover, when students return to their home nations they inspire others to follow in their footsteps and the cycle continues.

Jemaah Islamiyah

JI is one of the more prominent terrorist organisations in the region. There are a number of questions about this group that seem to be continually asked. These questions include: does al-Qaeda or JI have a cell within the MILF or is there a separate al-Qaeda in South-East Asia that merely draws its member from existing rebel groups?; is the MILF aware of the existence of this cell?; and has JI or al-Qaeda infiltrated MILF, or co-opted them? In fact, connections between the MILF and JI have already been clearly established. Camp Abu Bakr, the main MILF base that was captured by the Philippine Armed Forces in 2000, was a training ground for Muslim radicals and extremists. Other MILF camps apparently continue to be used for training foreign militants. However, Philippine intelligence officials are convinced that there are no Filipino members of JI. As mentioned above, it is a characteristic of terrorist groups such as JI that they work with the local militant groups and tap into the existing support networks.

The best work on the activities of JI in Indonesia has been done by the International Crisis Group (ICG), which has monitored terrorist groups in South-East Asia and elsewhere. The ICG's February 2000 report on Indonesia noted that there had been a split in JI that was weakening the organisation. The ICG reported that the majority faction of JI will remain a long-term security threat for Indonesia. The leaders of this faction believe that military force is necessary to achieve an Islamic state in Indonesia and that indoctrination and recruitment efforts are likely to produce cadres more hot-headed than their teachers—people who look beyond Indonesia and follow a broader international agenda. At the same time, the ICG believes it is

also clear that there are many smaller JI groups within Indonesia. Some members of these smaller groups have had training in Afghanistan or Mindanao and their deep-seated local grievances could lead them to draw inspiration from the *fatwa* issued by bin Laden in September 2001.

While there is a vast difference between drawing inspiration from al-Qaeda and working with al-Qaeda operatives, the ICG believes that the attraction of martyrdom and the limited resources involved in suicide attacks could make these smaller JI groups more dangerous than the organisation's bureaucrats. Indeed, the ICG feels that there are important lessons to be learned from the Indonesian experience and recommends that far more attention should be paid to understanding the recruitment methods of jihadist organisations, not just JI but also local groups with more parochial concerns.

In particular, the ICG thinks that more attention needs to be given to the indoctrination process that these groups undertake, while also understanding that the same 'educational' material, when taught by different teachers, can lead in very different directions. The top priority should be to prevent the emergence of the kind of international training centre that Afghanistan was in the 1980s, especially since the personal bonds established in that conflict seem to be more important than ideology or money in facilitating partnerships among jihadist groups. The ICG report also notes that democratic reforms, especially an impartial and credible legal system, a neutral and competent law enforcement agency and better access to justice, remain essential to preventing the kind of radicalisation that terrorist groups can manipulate. In the Philippines, the ICG's report has been studied extensively and many government officials agree with these recommendations.

Muslim converts

Conversion to Islam is not a new phenomenon in the Philippines. The trend peaked in the 1970s at the height of the conflict in Mindanao. Muslims believe that Islam is the first religion in the Philippines and that converts therefore are merely returning to their original faith. In fact, they call themselves 'Balik Islam', meaning return to Islam. Many of these converts have organised into quite a radical fringe group. Militant Muslim converts assisted Abu Sayyaf and JI in the 27 February 2004 bombing of Superferry 14 in the Philippines, an incident that was the second biggest terrorist bombing operation in South-East Asia after the 2002 Bali attacks.

The number of converts from 1970 to the present is more than 100 000. Some convert for convenience. In the Middle East, guest workers who convert to Islam enjoy benefits that non-Muslims do not. Groups spreading Islamic faith, composed mostly of converts, mushroomed in the 1990s. These are legal organisations, but they can be used to channel funds to extremists. Converts have been spreading out from the southern island of Mindanao to Luzon. In 2002, in the town of Anda, in the province of Pangasinan on Luzon, a police raid discovered that a group of Muslim converts had been conducting military training. I visited the site of the training camp and saw foxholes, a cooking oil can that was pock-marked with bullet holes, outposts and an obstacle course. The police had found a few guns, anti-personnel mines, grenades and combat uniforms. They also seized coded handwritten notes and illustrations on the parts of grenades, the parts of a rifle, and how to fire an RPG. This discovery indicates that Muslim converts have within their ranks radicals who have drawn inspiration from armed Muslim rebel groups in other parts of the country. The village was planned as a community of converts, where they envisioned setting up a madrassah and a mosque, and making a living away from the Catholic Christian majority in the Philippines.

Conclusion

As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, terrorism in South-East Asia is a complex, highly nuanced phenomena. The issues discussed have indicated that the problem exists on both the macro and micro levels, involving the interplay of international and local factors. Indeed, Islam in South-East Asia is not quite the same as Islam in the Middle East. Beyond the five pillars of Islam—the Arkan-al-Islam is the profession of faith in Allah, prayer, fasting, the giving of alms and the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca—there are many permutations. Malaysian writer, Karim Razlan, has observed that, beyond the five pillars, Muslims enter a quagmire because, while the faith is the same, the expressions of the faith differ radically across the Islamic world. A Muslim in the Philippines is different from a Muslim in Thailand. In South-East Asia, Islam came via the winds of commerce and it was not imposed but accepted voluntarily. For this reason, Islam in South-East Asia is often described as being a gentler form; yet, in its origins, Islam remains an Arab religion and Muslim converts in South-East Asia have always looked to the Arab world for inspiration. The writer V.S. Naipaul believes that, once converted, a non-Arab Muslim develops an altered world of the view: 'His holy places are in Arab lands, his sacred language is Arabic'.[2]

By a similar quirk of fate, many Filipino Muslims have little connection with their counterparts in Indonesia or Malaysia. They might know more about Libya than Aceh or Kelantan. Members of Abu Sayyaf espouse jihad in the way that they were taught in the Middle East or Pakistan. For the MILF, Afghanistan and Pakistan are more familiar territory than Malaysia and Indonesia. While this is now starting to change, it is still the mainstream experience—at least for many Filipino Muslims. Within this already complex situation, two streams of Islamic political thought are emerging: the first a modernist

[2] V.S. Naipaul, *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions Among Converted Peoples*, Random House, New York, 1998, p. xi.

view and the second a more traditional standpoint. The modernist view argues that Islam should take the knowledge, the science and the military power of the West and learn how to use them, while the traditionalists believe that the only way forward is a return to the purity of their sacred book, the Koran. Traditionalist Muslims feel that the reason Europeans have beaten them in the past is because their faith is impure. These two contending perspectives are operating today in South-East Asia and across the Muslim world.

PART II

Introduction: Complexity

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy

That war is complex no doubt seems self-evident. Indeed, the acceptance of the intrinsic complexity of war would seem to be beyond controversy. Unfortunately, that is not the case. From time to time military professionals have been promised a technological panacea that will eliminate friction, chaos, and even bloodshed from warfare. We are currently living through such a period. Essentially, the debate boils down to a divide between, on one hand, the disciples of Clausewitz and, on the other, the proponents of technological silver bullets, which we are told constitute a Revolution in Military Affairs. This syndrome grew out of the first Gulf War, but gathered pace after the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) air campaign against Serbia. Hopefully, some of its more fanciful manifestations have latterly been chastened by reality.

The spectacular US success in the Gulf War of 1991, coinciding with the 'end of history' debates, spawned an ahistorical form of hubris. Not for the first time in history were we assured that all that had gone before was obsolete. A new way of warfare was at hand. Commanders equipped with omniscient situational awareness could destroy targets with precision munitions. According to the technocrats, the warfare of the globalisation era would mirror the clinical, high-tech efficiency of the global capital markets. Of course, such optimistic predictions had accompanied nearly every technical innovation from the musket—through the minie ball—to the aircraft. It was not Francis Fukuyama,

but rather the leading advocates of airpower in the 1920s, who first insisted that history was irrelevant.

Yet just as history did not end, neither did the innate primordial violence and friction of war dissipate. The only currency exchanged in combat is violence—an insight for which we are indebted to Clausewitz, not Donald Trump. Moreover, the essentially political nature of war has endured. The global order has fragmented and become much more complex, diffuse and ambiguous with the passing of the bipolar equilibrium of the Cold War. Warfare and warfighting have reflected that political trend. In so doing, it has retained its timeless, innate characteristics. I cannot express this better than the insightful, if provocative, strategic thinkers Williamson Murray and MacGregor Knox who wrote:

> The technological utopians are free to reject Clausewitz—who saw more warfare at first hand than they are ever likely to—as an unworldly early nineteenth century figure whose Kantian philosophical framework held no place for technological change … Clausewitz had utter contempt for those of his contemporaries who suffered from similar delusions: Kind hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to defeat or disarm an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is a … dangerous business … No technological marvels can alter war's unpredictable nature as a paradoxical trinity composed of 'primordial violence', politics and chance.[1]

By accepting the enduring complexity of warfare, we are rejecting a dangerous, fashionable form of conventional wisdom. Its evangelists have demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of inconvenient facts. In the wake of Operation *Desert Storm*, we faced Somalia. No sooner had the Republican Guard collapsed in 2003 than a low-tech

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[1] MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, 'Conclusion: The future behind us' in MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 178.

insurgency emerged to remind the Coalition that war is a violent clash of wills, rather than a sterile video game. The West is perhaps the victim of its own success. So overwhelming is Western military technological superiority, that those enemies of the West have vacated the conventional battlespace.

They are seeking to drag the West into complex physical terrain—principally cities. They are interposing cultural and political complexity between themselves and the West's precision sensors and weapons. In other words, they are hugging population centres and sites of religious significance to negate our overmatch. Our opponents are also striking deep into the heart of our sophisticated, vulnerable societies. It would indeed be a travesty if we squandered the rich intellectual legacy of Clausewitz to the Western way of war through a misplaced utopian quest to eliminate complexity and friction from war. Hopefully the views set forth in the following chapters will constitute a modest line in the sand against that trend.

Chapter 4

Strategy and Campaigning: End, Ways and Means

Jonathan Bailey

The Contention

Clausewitz urged that 'the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish … the kind of war upon which they are embarking'.[1] If a nation is prepared for such a war, its leaders will also have ensured that they have armed forces practising a doctrine based on appropriate concepts, and equipped accordingly. In other words, it is about ensuring coherence between ends, ways and means—about the relationship between policy, the armed forces and technology.

My contention is that, over the last 100 years, military establishments, encouraged and directed by their political masters, have persistently underestimated the length and costs of their campaigns and have frequently had little idea of the actual nature of their undertakings. They have often been woefully ill-equipped as a result. A common factor in this appears to be the desire that campaigns should be short, decisive and cheap; therefore with less risk, but a greater likelihood of popular support—to be 'Home by Christmas'. Campaigns against terrorists, or maybe we should merely say guerrillas, are seldom like that—but then neither are most other military experiences.

1 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, (eds and trans) Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p. 88.

This delusion has often been reached irrespective of the historical evidence and the analysis of current capabilities to the contrary. The desire and conviction that campaigns should, ought and in fact will be so, has often led to the creation of forces to fight on terms other than those which prove optimal in the event. The result is that those seeking a short, decisive and cheap campaign have very often laid the foundations for the opposite. Their unpreparedness and delusions have abetted costly attrition, and the resulting bill in international calamity, casualties and materiel have been shocking.

We should do better, and a more rigorous objectivity and self-analysis—perhaps beyond what hierarchy and the military culture of deference can muster—should be applied to shape and inform our armed forces. On the other hand, if this contention has substance, some might conclude that the serial misbehaviour, of which defence establishments and their political masters have been guilty, is so apparently irrational and foolish that it may in some way be endemic to the civil–military condition and not amenable to correction by better training, education or more assiduous staff work. It is perhaps but a minor act in 'the Human Comedy'—in short, we may be deep into 'Norman Dixon country' or that dangerous, manic world of overconfidence described more recently by Dominic Johnson.[2]

Delusions and Decision-Making

Over-confidence seems to be especially common when strategic decisions are made by unaccountable leaders or democratically elected leaders who are able to operate in a small group without rigorous and critical scrutiny. It may be feared that larger, more open groups would hamper decision-making; and when decisions are made, those on the periphery of this inner group may fear that any criticisms they make might be viewed as unpatriotic, and move them even further from the

2 D.D.P. Johnson, *Overconfidence in War*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

centre of power. This can lead to self-censorship, thereby removing an important check on this 'small-group behaviour'.

On the other hand, effective leaders typically accept heavy responsibility and risks, withstand setbacks and criticism, and still believe they are right. The confidence of a leader is vital to confidence in them by others; and in matters of war, these qualities come to the fore. As John Maynard Keynes observed over 60 years ago:

> In the case of the Prime Minister, this blindness is an essential element in his strength. If he could see even a little, if he became even faintly cognisant of the turmoil of ideas and projects and schemes to save the country which are tormenting the rest of us, his superbly brazen self-confidence would be fatally impaired.[3]

Hitler wanted generals 'like butchers dogs' who would attack anyone they saw; but he did not expect them to challenge him, or to cast doubt on his grand designs. The visions and convictions of Alexander, Napoleon, Hitler and Mao changed the world; but professional soldiers seldom see that as their life's purpose—in a sense they are merely 'military artisans'. The challenges of civil–military relations in Western societies have been eloquently analysed by Eliot Cohen in *Supreme Command*,[4] and it is rare good fortune if a state can combine excellence in both its political and military leadership. Generals sometimes offer flawed judgments, but they are nevertheless a unique and indispensable source of specialist advice about their profession. Their views deserve attention, if not necessarily acceptance, and in democracies they often receive that attention. The military can be prisoners of their own limited perspectives which can make their advice lethal when taken out of a more sophisticated strategic context. Yet the military judgement of the soldier is also often distorted by acquiescence in the face of political pressures. Equally, sound professional advice has frequently been overruled by

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3 Quoted in Johnson, *Overconfidence in War*, p. 85.

4 Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command*, The Free Press, New York, 2002.

the conviction of those uneducated in warfare, but sure of their ideology and their ultimate political power of decision.

Case histories

The history of the last 100 years suggests that campaigns have tended to be longer than initially imagined and allowed for. This has often proven disastrous; although, where combat has not been intense, forces have had the benefit of time to adapt, and have often done so successfully. What is the evidence?

1905

The experience of the Russo–Japanese War of 1905 made it clear that the technology of indirect firing artillery, machine-guns and high velocity magazine-rifles in defence, let alone when reinforced by wire and trenches, would eliminate any likelihood of success by infantry manoeuvring in the open. This was widely recorded at the time and, in the immediate aftermath of the war, was scarcely controversial. Yet these lessons of the war did not fit the strategic imperatives of the day and were distorted or discarded. The clear auguries of the future of warfare, *à la* 1914–1918, generally went unheeded.

All parties prior to 1914 planned for a short war of rapid and decisive manoeuvre. Warfare, in their estimation, remained more acceptable and thereby possible. In the face of lethal new technologies, armies decided that there was no option but to endure and thereby prevail. Often they reached for spiritual solutions, and some hoped to manipulate human nature rather than to understand and address the emerging technologies and tactical possibilities of war. The more telling the evidence that new fundamentals would make any war long and costly, the greater the necessary political and military insistence that it must not be—and by perverse logic that it could not be, because

neither side had the means to fight such a war. In the opening battles of 1914, the French Army lost as many men in its rapid, attritional manoeuvring over open terrain as it did two years later in the Battles of Verdun and the Somme combined.

On 10 September 1904, Colonel Repington, the military correspondent of *The Times* of London, made 'A Plea for History':

> After being duly registered and indexed … the best of these reports start on a silent circular tour and pass round … to a number of permanent officials and political personages, mostly too busy to read them carefully and seldom troubling to do more than scratch an initial, or to write the words 'very interesting', if it finds them in exceptionally expansive mood. Then if luck has prevented the report from becoming lost, mislaid, or forgotten … it returns to the office of origin, and it is solemnly buried and pompously forgotten. The small and restricted governing class receive a hazy impression of something having been written somewhere by somebody; there is nothing done.[5]

Blitzkrieg*: A new cult of the offensive*

In the 1930s, Germany planned a 're-match' of the First World War. Acknowledging that this would have to be fought on other terms, obviating a *Materialschlacht*, it adopted another 'cult of the offensive'—*Blitzkrieg*. Invasions of Germany's neighbours proceeded against mainstream military advice and proved disastrously successful. The political powers of the day, imbued with ideological certainty and with the advantage of the strategic initiative, asserted the wisdom of their superior judgement and the necessity for decisive offensive action. Successes led to the idea and formulation of *Blitzkrieg* after the event. This proved to be a catastrophic liability which died on the Soviet steppe, in a *Materialschlacht*. *Blitzkrieg*

5 Charles à Court Repington, 'A Plea for History', *The Times*, 10 September 1904; reprinted in Repington, *Imperial Strategy: By the Military Correspondent of 'The Times'*, London, 1906, pp. 216–17.

had sought and failed to frustrate the prevailing dynamics of firepower and manoeuvre in time and space.

The German leadership had viewed the Soviet Union as a 'colossus of clay without a head'; and it had been Hitler's calculation on launching Operation *Barbarossa* that, by 'kicking in the door', the 'whole rotten edifice' would collapse: 'The problem of German intelligence was not really the paucity of intelligence sources, nor even the quality of information available, and the structural inefficiency of the service, the problem was one of attitude'.[6]

Operation *Barbarossa*, which is often spoken of as some brilliant operation, was more a metaphysical plan than a military one, and the product of an article of political faith rather than dispassionate operational analysis. As a result of an equal misreading of their opponent's mentality, the Japanese were to suffer a similar fate to the Germans, in a prolonged war of attrition in which their opponent had the materiel advantage—an advantage of which they had always been keenly aware and which they intended to circumvent through speed and surprise.

Convinced that the Soviet Union would collapse in the face of a rapid armoured manoeuvre, in 1940–41 Hitler prepared for Operation *Barbarossa* by stripping the Wehrmacht of much of its firepower. In his mind, it would not be required, for the war was to be won by him by December 1941 on other terms. Any assumption that firepower and vast quantities of materiel would be required after that date would be, in essence, an assumption that his premise was wrong. This would challenge the entire enterprise, but more importantly the ideological tenets that underwrote them.

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6 J. Förster and E. Mawdsley, 'Hitler and Stalin in Perspective: Secret Speeches on the Eve of Barbarossa', *War in History*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2004, p. 68.

From 22 June until 26 August 1941, the Wehrmacht 'manoeuvred' its head into the Soviet noose and in the next six months suffered 830 000 casualties—more than Germany had incurred in the Battles of Verdun and the Somme combined—although the size of the killing ground and the 'glamour' of the manoeuvres, well-publicised by the Nazi propaganda machine, even today persuade some that it was an exemplar of operational planning and manoeuvre at its finest. For the next three years, much of the fighting on the Eastern Front degenerated into a primitive, low-tech static warfare, typical of the middle years of the First World War, which the Germans had sought to avoid and for which the Soviets had planned and were well-suited.

The Cold War

After the Second World War, few expected that US forces would remain in Europe and Japan 60 years later; but they do remain, for many reasons—and despite a successful, if unpredicted, outcome to the Cold War in Europe—after a 'campaign' of extraordinary financial cost and length. With hindsight, we now see that the Cold War was itself a limited war, on a massive scale, as much as any of the 'small wars' it entailed. This limited war was conducted in the context of ideological struggle and was also waged by political means.

War was fought not merely on the battlefield, but also in parallel at 'peace talks'. Thus the Korean War dragged on, was not decisive, and continues in novel and menacing forms 50 years later. It may yet have a nuclear phase. The United States also found in its excruciating Vietnam War that the 'peace talks' in Paris, television screens, newsprint and college campuses were as much 'battle fronts' as were the Mekong Delta or Hué. The war was long, decisive in the wrong sense from an American viewpoint, and very expensive. With hindsight, the war of Vietnamese national independence started well before 1945 and probably ended only with the repulse of the Chinese invasion of 1979.

Northern Ireland

Would a British subaltern on his first tour of duty in Northern Ireland in, say, 1970, have thought it likely that his battalion would be on operational duty in the Province after he had retired 34 years later? We have learned much and learned well from the experience, but it has often proved painful.

Israel and her neighbours

Israel persisted in the misleading idea that quick battlefield victories, such as those in 1967 and 1973, constituted successes in some fundamental sense. True, Israel survived, and any single defeat for Israel has a different meaning to a defeat for its neighbours, but there was also the idea that it had defeated its opponents in some decisive way, as opposed to merely pre-empted or temporarily held their attack. This psychology, and the military structures and training that resulted, left Israel grievously ill-prepared to face the Intifada in all its rapidly evolving forms. Early episodes of the Intifada broadcast on television showed untrained members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) staging what amounted to counter-riots against stone-throwing crowds—attracting worldwide opprobrium. Israel failed to see that battlefield successes were but intense and vivid moments in a campaign which would last more than 50 years, and continues without an end in sight. In turn, it may now, however, only be by continuing a drawn-out campaign that Israel can achieve its own long-term, national, demographic and territorial objectives—that the Intifadas have been but wild episodes that it seeks to weather in this 'biblical' epic, with a more distant ending than that which suits the Palestinians.

The New World Order

Since the end of the Cold War, the pattern of military operations in the so-called 'New World Order' has seemed clear and the requirements unsurprising. There have been many varieties of 'peace operation'

around the world—from the Balkans to Rwanda, and Afghanistan to East Timor. Some have been tempted to attribute success in many of these operations to the critical role of airpower, which is said to have led to triumph in short and decisive campaigns. Up to a point they would be right, for air operations have indeed proven an important factor in the early warfighting phases of many of these joint campaigns. These intense phases have generally proven to be short, relatively inexpensive and highly telegenic, but success in them has far from constituted success in the overall campaign. They have, more realistically, been merely preliminary enabling operations for the main and decisive phases of operations, and the nation-building and peacekeeping which follow them, for these are central to the purpose—the end of the campaign—rather than merely its ways and means. After all, if these subsequent phases were not the most important phases, what was the purpose of the preliminary warfighting activities? Stopping immediate criminal acts was indeed often an immediate and beneficial consequence of intervention, but disengagement after a short warfighting phase would not have prevented on-going bloodshed—on the contrary it might well have made it worse.

Although the Bosnian crisis was settled at Dayton, thousands of troops remain in Bosnia and the campaign is not over. In that sense, the idea of a modern aerial *Blitzkrieg*, so much in vogue for a while and linked to the unrealistic chimera of information superiority and the transparent battlefield, has proved an illusion in which a number of military establishments have been complicit. The campaign in Bosnia also taught the need to review the military doctrine upon which armies had trained, although much of the 'new' doctrine for 'Peace Operations' turned out not to be new at all.

In Kosovo, six years after the Kosovo Force entered that province of Serbia, there has still been no political settlement and the outcome of the campaign remains unclear. It did, however, highlight the short-

comings of airpower against forces in the field and it provided invaluable lessons in exactly what was required when, having removed a regime, one wishes to insert a completely new government. The rebuilding of Afghanistan—'nation-building' seems too ambitious a term to apply to this disparate state—would seem to be a very perilous and long-term project. Nevertheless, in a broad perspective, the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan) is probably as important in preventing future terrorism as the concurrent combat operations conducted under other auspices. That said, optimism as to its outcome may be misplaced.

The Gulf War

The Gulf War of 1991 appeared to be a stunning success—as in many respects it was. Yet it was only the warfighting operations on land that fell dormant in Iraq, as the focus of the campaign moved on to other fronts—such as the UN Headquarters in New York. Air operations continued over Iraq for another 12 years, and land operations took on disparate forms in the Kurdish north. Thus the Gulf campaign, for perhaps there has only been one since 1991, was not as short as it at first seemed; nor is it yet complete.

Worryingly, it may have been the semblance that victory in 1991 had been rapid, decisive, technologically brilliant and cheap, at least in terms of casualties, that encouraged the initial conviction that it must indeed in some sense be over, when that was in essence far from the case. Even when it was clear that it was not, this initial interpretation seems to have encouraged the belief that a 're-match', based in similar style on a technological mismatch, would end the matter, on and in conditions defined by the Coalition. It was not, however, clear whether this operation would merely topple Saddam Hussein 'the rogue', or be the means of reinventing Iraq in order to solve greater strategic problems in the region. To some, it seemed as if the two were

synonymous and that the chosen military instrument was somehow one of universal application with a socket to fit all 'nuts'.

The determination to fight Saddam Hussein again, with a pre-emptive attack on Coalition terms, if Hussein himself would not oblige, seemed to ensure that he could not evade his fate. He would have to fight First World forces on First World terms and would not be able to hide above that threshold with his weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or below it with terrorism. Once that fight had been conducted, it seemed persuasive to believe that this was indeed the end of major combat operations (MCO), for surely the regime ('the rotten edifice') would collapse once the 'door had been kicked in' and the population 'liberated'. If the intent of operations in Iraq in 2003 was merely 'regime destruction', which it was not, then the short decisive warfighting operation of March and April 2003 might in itself have constituted success. In all other respects, it might have been counter-productive, given the uncertain and destabilising consequences for an already unstable region of merely unseating a secular Saddam Hussein, who apparently had no WMD. It will only have been worthwhile if subsequent operations shape the emergence of Iraq as a strong and stable nation, befitting its large and educated population and oil wealth. The outcome will remain in the balance for many years.

'Phase 4' was all along the decisive phase, yet was not recognised and enacted as such by commanders prior to the Coalition's ground operation against Iraq in spring 2003. NATO's intent in entering Kosovo in 1999 was 'regime change' for humanitarian reasons. As a result, by 2003, very vivid, precise and recent experience was available, making clear exactly what is required after a government is replaced by force of arms—from security and currency reform to social reconstruction and the restoration of economic infrastructure. Hindsight was not required to note the nation-building task which followed MCO, for it was described in many thoughtful public

analyses and by many campaign-planners themselves. The moment troops cross the 'line of departure', they create, with every pace, a rear area of complex character, requiring all forms of security, peacekeeping and nation-building, and entailing all the legal responsibilities of an occupying power.

While warfighting may be decisive in its own terms, it may not be so in terms of broader strategic objectives in the 'War on Terror', which also seeks to address the causes of terrorism, as the UK's 'New Chapter' to its Strategic Defence Review emphasised in 2002. There seems to have been little appreciation by political decision-makers that a long campaign in Iraq would be so 'attritional': demand so many troops, so much heavy armour and ammunition, incur such financial costs, so many casualties, at such a political price, and cause so much ill-feeling in international affairs. Yet, this was understood and voiced by many.

Ironically, while forces may have been specifically designed for rapid deployment and employment, this failure to understand how they should re-configure and be employed as the campaign developed was, in fact, a manifestation of a lack of strategic readiness and a sign of inflexibility. Forces built to achieve rapid decision had neither the means nor the orders to reach one in the novel, but not unforeseen, circumstances that unfolded from summer 2003. The initiative was surrendered with perhaps costly consequences, as 'Clausewitzian tilt' seemed to favour an enemy, now 'morphed' into an insurgent guerrilla—a 'morphing' that was already underway before the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime. As so often before, the dream of some high-tech *Blitzkrieg* proved a chimera, as operations became more a test of low-tech soldierly skills, stretching over years.

There was a worrying inclination to deny, even in October 2003, that the Coalition faced an insurgency, for this would have challenged certain premises of the campaign. If Iraq had been 'liberated', why

would there be resistance? If large numbers of troops were indeed required to counter some insurgency and if Iraqi oil could not finance Iraq's reconstruction, then the prospectus upon which the campaign was mounted might be deemed questionable.

The doctrinal premises of information superiority or even dominance, of speed, fire-superiority and the avoidance of attrition, had itself become a party to creating the conditions that those forces had been designed to avoid or render irrelevant. There is a need to challenge some of the more exciting tenets of futuristic military thinking. For example, the notion that we might enjoy information superiority in the decisive operations in which we are currently engaged in Iraq, or information dominance on some future 'transparent battlefield'—a term still commonly bandied about—does seem rather unreflective and self-serving. It is a grand and seductive idea that may have as much chance of success in contemporary complex operations as another such idea, *Blitzkrieg*, had on the steppes of the Soviet Union.

Paradoxically, it would be better if our working assumption was more modestly one of our own information inferiority and if we viewed our challenge to be to minimise that disadvantage. For example, our opponents in Iraq today undoubtedly hold information superiority over us: they are better able to identify our personnel and what they are doing than vice versa; after all, we wear especially procured distinctive dress—the camouflaged military uniform. Expensive high-tech camouflage paint ensures that our military vehicles are conspicuous, and these move routinely in large groups between well-identified bases, along predictable and well-observed routes. Our strategic and operational objectives and our tactical operations are probably better known to the enemy than are his to us. Our opponents' identities, appearance, means of transport and movements are, by comparison, harder to ascertain and to understand.

Large amounts of money are now being spent in surprising ways to try to understand the way the terrorist mind and organisation works. Much of this is being focused on analogous behaviour in non-military environments. For example, evolutionary theorists are being hired to explain how terrorist cells and ideas might evolve. Computer games and virtual wars are being studied—not so much the games themselves, but the way that independent players in the real world cooperate or 'gang up' in cyberspace, adopting bizarre stratagems to deceive and beat others. There are also many studies into the behaviour of criminal gangs and successful police methods of dealing with them. After all, police forces are more used to conducting manhunts than are most armies.

The future operational environment

It is easy enough to point out past failure. What is our best guess about the future and what is our understanding, in a Clausewitzian sense, of the nature of future operations?

In 1998, enjoying its new supremacy, and before the United States had embarked on its 'Global War on Terror', Ralph Peters described the growing wealth of the United States in the Information Age by which its empire would enjoy an even greater advantage over impoverished masses elsewhere: 'We are not Trojans. We are mightier. We rule the skies and seas and possess the power to rule the land when we are sufficiently roused'. He noted that this power would cause envy in those who would ultimately attack a complacent West, and those future enemies were the 'perfect embodiment of all the evil potential that lies at the heart of man'. They would be let loose on the children of the West who in turn would be 'sent out to fight the legions of

darkness … Man not space is the last frontier'.[7] Peters, often cast as the wayward radical, had anticipated the new orthodoxy of American strategic thought that was to dominate the next decade.

In 2000, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General H. Shelton observed:

> As the diversity of threats and non-state actors increases, so too will the complexity of our military tasks. Future adversaries may try and stay below the threshold of clear aggression, further complicating appropriate response options. We can expect more failed states as people struggle for independence, for political legitimacy, economic and resource advantage, all done in climates of violence, repression and deprivation.[8]

Others noted that this was hardly new. One Chinese analyst maintained that 'all strong countries make rules, while all rising ones break them and exploit loopholes. Barbarians always rise by breaking the rules of civilized and developed countries, which is what human history is all about'.[9]

Chinese views on warfare reflect a recognition of the growing complexity of military operations:

> Warfare is no longer an exclusively Imperial garden where professional soldiers alone can mingle … it is precisely the diversity of the means employed that has enlarged the concept of warfare … warfare is the process of transcending the domains of soldiers, military units and military affairs, and is increasingly becoming a matter for politicians, scientists and even bankers.[10]

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7 Ralph Peters, 'Our Old New Enemies' in L.J. Matthews (ed.), *Challenging the United States Symmetrically and Asymmetrically: Can America be Defeated*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, July 1998, p. 238.

8 Quoted in D. Gouré, *The Limits of Alliances*, Lexington Institute, Arlington, 2004, p. 25.

9 Quoted in D. Harrison and D. McElroy, 'China's Military Plots 'Dirty War' Against the West', *The Sunday Telegraph*, London, 17 October 1999.

10 Quoted in Bill Gertz, *The China Threat*, Regnery, Washington, DC, 2002, p. 16.

The complexity of operations in this new environment was described in 2001 by the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Sir Rupert Smith, reflecting no doubt his experiences in Bosnia and involvement in operations in Kosovo:

> We are conducting operations now as though we are on a stage … there are at least two producers, each with their own idea of the script, are more often than not mixed up with the stage hands, ticket collectors and ice cream vendors, while a factional audience, its attention focused on that part of the auditorium where it is noisiest, views and gains an understanding of events by peering down their drinking straws.[11]

The speech by President George W. Bush to Congress on 20 September 2001 warned Americans that they should 'not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have seen' in a 'task that does not end'. Clearly the expectation was for a global campaign of unlimited duration, characteristic of past imperial commitments. The 'Global War on Terror' was seen to be 'a long haul', yet forces were increasingly designed for short wars using highly deployable, novel technologies. Little was done to prepare for the sort of protracted, attritional, low-intensity operations of counter-insurgency and the nation-building that it would entail. Alternatively, it was perhaps thought that neither of these last two tasks would be required in operations in Iraq.

Such operations require an interagency command structure harnessing all departments of government, and concepts, doctrine and equipment for guerrilla wars and nation-building—all of which are manpower-intensive. Yet, despite disappointment that operations in Iraq were proving more attritional than expected, American self-confidence still seemed evident:

11 Rupert Smith, 'Wars in our time – a survey of recent and continuing conflicts,' *World Defence Systems*, Issue 4, 2001.

> The American military is now the strongest the world has ever known … stronger than the Wehrmacht in 1940 … than the legions of Rome at the height of Roman power. For years to come, no other nation is likely even to try to rival American might.[12]

This seems likely to be true, but the issue is also a matter of how power is measured: in terms of the cost of inputs and explosive calories that can be delivered, or in terms of what effects any absolute measure of power is able to achieve in a complex strategic environment. Maybe the value of the 'military currency' has been devalued in this respect, and high denomination 'bills' may not buy the attractive items which the 'consumer' imagines should be within their 'budget'.

Matching ends, ways and means in a complex environment

How are we to match ends, ways and means in an increasingly complex battlespace? Do we really understand the nature of the operations upon which we embark? Some Western nations aspire to change regimes and promote human rights and other Western values—if necessary by force of arms. The United Nations now sets the rights of the individual above those of the governments of sovereign nations.

This new orthodoxy, which until recently was pure heresy, has led to military interventions. These operations have created unusual ideological companions as the old polarities of the Cold War prove inappropriate to the new dynamic. In caricature: the old left, who detest the assumption that 'West is Best', denounce military intervention, seeing it as incorrigible, serial misbehaviour by those who cannot let go of old imperial habits. They are joined in their

12 R.P. Galeti, *Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare*, Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, No. 04-3, p. 3.

policy conclusions by members of the old right, of isolationist or nationalist instincts, who believe that it is not worth the bones of their grenadiers or the gold of their treasuries to save those who are incapable of ruling themselves—people who will at heart resent any help they are given.

In opposition to this odd couple are the new interventionists. They also come from the old left, but are now transformed into 'Fabian Imperialists'. David Livingstone took 'Christianity and Civilisation' to Africa (both of which have become somewhat 'politically incorrect' ideas), followed by the soldier and the 'Union Jack'. These fundamentally Judaeo-Christian notions have been 're-packaged' for a new age, and 're-branded' as Human Rights, supported by the word of international law, if not the word of scripture, and enforced by blue helmets not pith helmets, under the UN not national flag. These interventionists know that 'up-river in the heart of darkness' unspeakable things are being done, and that it is their moral duty to put a stop to it, by force if necessary—for their militaries are 'a force for good', or what George W. Bush called 'advancing the strategy of freedom'. It is not just that they believe that they are right; they believe that they are right in a profoundly moral way. Bush also asserted that 'freedom is God's gift to every individual', implying perhaps that American military power is His agent. The Germans may have had '*Gott Mit Uns*', but this more evangelical view—a neo-muscular Christianity—has not been fashionable since Victorian times.

Their allies come from the old imperial right—'Kipling's Men'. They, of course, are not surprised that other folk make a mess of their own affairs, and they believe that it falls to them to sort out the resultant horrors, confident in their comparative advantage, built up from centuries of global military experience. If there is a new 'imperial mission' (which has yet to be clarified but should be), this clearly

requires both a 'long view' and forces trained for all aspects of 'imperial policing'.

Whatever the mission and its motives, campaign planners find that the environment for their plans is changing rapidly. The requirement to deploy anywhere around the world has, in effect, caused the three physical dimensions of battlespace to expand. At the same time, the fourth dimension—Time—has contracted. The speed and intensity of media coverage, combined with a sensitised, alert, yet inconstant domestic and international opinion, have 'compressed' time, making it more valuable. Strategic decision-makers now have less time to act and achieve a desired outcome than they might have had in the past.

Modern Western forces have largely been designed to be 'one-shot weapons' and it doesn't take long to fire a 'one-shot weapon'. Equally, the belief that operations will thereby be short erroneously forms part of the justification to maintain a 'light logistic tail'—the rationale of 1914. In 2004, some of the highest priorities in US procurement were overcoming reliance on a single factory making bullets and a very limited capacity to make infantry fighting vehicle track and armour plate for Humvees.

Time is relative, has value, can be billed, saved, sacrificed, budgeted for, won and consumed, but it is a non-renewable resource. The great commanders always appreciated the importance of time in their calculations. The draining passage of time has, in a sense, become the 'barren steppe' of space that faced Napoleon and Hitler, and should be seen as a form of attrition. Seizing and holding the initiative is to time as seizing and holding vital ground is to manoeuvre. 'Pegging' out the boundaries of this battlespace and turning the attrition of time on an opponent is a high accomplishment of strategic command and operational art, but a daunting task.

Yet, paradoxically, while the need to deploy more capable forces at short notice has increased, so too has the requirement to maintain them in the field over longer periods. There is a requirement to endure and prevail in longer operations, where the balance of advantage has already been bought by that rapid action and successes. These types of operation may have very different characteristics. The logistic requirements of nation-building and counterinsurgency make demands which are attritional in their own way, but seldom factored into military procurement plans.

There is also a fifth dimension of battlespace—Cyberspace—and at some future date, there might be a new 'Port Arthur/Pearl Harbor' of the Information Age, perhaps a digital *Blitzkrieg*—a cyber 'torpedo attack' into the 'hard drive' of the 'USS *America*'.

There may be these five dimensions to warfare, but ultimately war is a human endeavour and it is not easily contained by simple formulae. It is as much about perceptions as concepts and technology, and today's five dimensions of warfare are viewed through the distorting lens of the media. Global and domestic opinion is shaped by shifting views on ethics in different cultures, and by changing legislation and evolving opinions on domestic and international law. When operations are prolonged, it is especially important to shape these perceptions. Fuel and ammunition were the key logistic constraints on fire and manoeuvre in 'Industrial-Age Warfare', and the supply of bandwidth is perhaps for now the constraint on networked operations in 'The Information Age'. By analogy, civil power supply is perhaps the vital logistic consideration in nation-building, not least because of the perceptions it shapes and the constraints that those perceptions can impose. Equally, legality and legitimacy may play the equivalent role of armour plating in promoting force protection. For the insurgent, time, numbers, casualties, perceptions, legal constraints and political pressures may be their allies, and these constitute forms of 'virtual manoeuvre' to avoid superior firepower.

Criteria for success

Success in this complex battlespace is likely to require much greater interagency and departmental cooperation than previously accomplished. Many of those who castigated the armed forces for their lack of determination to engage more fully in joint activity over recent decades may themselves be the hardest to corral into disciplined cohesive action to ensure that broad campaign objectives are met. Difficult issues of departmental primacy will arise and a clash of cultures seems inevitable. For example, should national aid programs in a theatre of operations be directed primarily to secure campaign success, or to achieve some more general moral imperative such as the alleviation of global poverty? Such distinctions will be very real and controversial when ordering priorities of expenditure.

Military technology focuses ever more keenly on how to achieve strategic reach, gather information, deliver precise munitions at the optimum time and place, and how to sustain the warfighter with state-of-the-art logistics. Unfortunately, technological advancement has often been at the expense of manpower, which is too often regarded as a burdensome overhead, when in fact a well-trained and motivated soldier is the key to any military capability. He or she cannot be bought off-the-shelf by signing a cheque. Creating the capability that a soldier represents takes years of sustained effort and money. Even such a soldier is unlikely to prevail if not part of an equally competent team, employed on a plan conceived by a well-trained and educated staff, well-versed in an appropriate doctrine. The good news is that, compared to equipment, thinking is very cheap.

This capability is likely to be found only in a military that is highly motivated and one possessing a deep culture and military ethos, at ease with and supported by its own society. Money spent on a professional corps of officers and non-commissioned officers and their education is likely to be a sound investment; but military organisms

are fragile and need to be tended carefully. It is also far from clear that decisions on the balance of investment adequately reflect the need to equip the soldier and civilian agencies with the means to succeed in campaigns whose endstates require success in counterinsurgency and nation-building rather than a clear-cut victory.

This is not to dismiss the importance of maintaining robust conventional forces. The key is to maintain a 'balanced force' in all senses, given the wide range of operations it will be expected to undertake. We need forces in which all troops can operate across the full spectrum of conflict, transitioning readily through a continuum of operations. Too great a bias towards one type of capability is rather like a literature student deciding to read only those set texts they like and neglecting the half that lack appeal, thereby ensuring that they cannot answer half the questions when sitting the exam.

It is interesting to note that the many of the UK's major allies do not see it this way at all and are currently structuring their forces on an opposite premise. Equally, we must maintain a vigilant watch for motes in our own eye.

Conclusion

The flawed political-military psychology of the twentieth century confronts us as a cautionary tale. Yet, we do know that, when confronted by obvious—but culturally unpalatable—conclusions, many armies will seek refuge in more attractive alternatives, however dysfunctional. These usually feature the delusion that campaigns can indeed be short, decisive, high-tech and cheap; that such campaigns require armies designed and trained to fight these, rather than the more obvious and likely, but distasteful, alternatives. Ironically, this conviction is often the very result of each army's own extensive experience to the contrary. Yet that experience has been so unpleasant

that the respective military establishments have determined that they will not engage in them again—sadly the choice has not been theirs to make, and they do relive these experiences, but now on disadvantageous terms.

If Clausewitz was wrong, and if the prospect of acknowledging the realities of future operations is too daunting, culturally unacceptable or morally repugnant, then it may well be tempting to follow common historical precedent: regret the nature of current operations and determine not to undertake them on those terms again; define the types of operations which would be preferred; and design, finance and equip a force to satisfy that craving and then to be surprised when that force is significantly ill-suited to what transpires to be required of it in future operations. We are after all but actors in a long-running 'human comedy'.

Chapter 5

Iraq, Afghanistan, and American Military Transformation

Stephen Biddle[*]

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue and events will yet determine whether America's war aims in either theatre are met. However, some outcomes are already clear: the Taliban no longer govern Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein no longer rules Iraq. The military campaigns of 2001–2002 and 2003 that ousted these regimes have already proven highly influential in the American defence planning debate. In particular, these campaigns gave powerful impetus to a collection of proposals for radical change—or 'transformation'—in the American military. Even before 2001, it was widely believed that a transnational revolution in information processing was transforming the nature of war.

The increasing power of networked information, many claimed, was erasing the need for massed conventional ground forces, substituting standoff precision-strike for the close combat of the past and replacing the breakthrough battle with the struggle for information supremacy as the decisive issue for success.[24] The campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq powerfully reinforced these perceptions: the speed and radically

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* The views expressed in this chapter are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the positions held by the United States Army, the Army War College, or the Department of Defense.

24 See, for example, Vice Admiral Arthur Cebrowski and John Garstka, 'Network-Centric Warfare', *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1998; Michael Vickers, *Warfare in 2020: A Primer*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington, DC, 1996; Andrew F. Krepinevich, 'Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions', *The National Interest*, Fall, 1994, pp. 30–42; and Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1993.

low casualties of the Coalition offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq seemed to offer trenchant empirical evidence to show that the hypothesised changes were in fact real.[25]

This in turn reinforced a series of interconnected proposals for transforming the American military from what has often been described as a heavy, slow-moving, Cold War relic into a leaner, faster, higher-technology force that exploits the connectivity of networked information to outmanoeuvre, outrange, and demoralise enemy forces without requiring their piecemeal destruction in close combat.[26] Some transformation advocates would even bypass the enemy military in the field altogether, using deep strikes from possibly intercontinental distances to destroy key nodes in a hostile economy or political control system in effects based operations that prevail by coercive bombing rather than brute force on the battlefield.[27]

These proposals have not gone unchallenged. In particular, critics have long argued that this transformation agenda overlooks the demands of inherently labour intensive, low-tech missions such as counterinsurgency or stability and support operations. Critics argue that the kind of streamlined, technology-dependent military that transformation advocates want would leave us unable to wage sustained counterinsurgencies of the type now ongoing in Iraq and

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25 See, for example, Donald Rumsfeld, 'Testimony before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense', FDCH Transcripts, 14 May 2003, p. 3; Paul Wolfowitz, 'Testimony on US Military Presence in Iraq: Implications for Global Defense Posture', House Armed Services Committee, Wednesday 18 June 2003, pp. 4–6; Jim Mannion, 'Rumsfeld Rejects Case for Boosting Size of Army', *Washington Times*, 6 August 2003; Rowan Scarborough, 'Decisive Force Now Measured by Speed', *Washington Times*, 7 May 2003; Max Boot, 'The New American Way of War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4, July/August 2003, pp. 41–58; R. James Woolsey, 'Objective: Democracy', *Washington Post*, 27 November 2001, p. 13; Tom Bowman, 'Studying Lessons of Battle Success', *Baltimore Sun*, 17 December 2001; Fareed Zakaria, 'Face the Facts: Bombing Works', *Newsweek*, 3 December 2001; James Webb, 'A New Doctrine for New Wars', *Wall Street Journal*, 30 November 2001; and Michael Kelly, 'The Air-Power Revolution', *Atlantic Monthly*, April 2002, pp. 18ff.

26 See references in note 2 above.

27 See, especially, Brigadier General David A. Deptula, *Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare*, Aerospace Education Foundation, Arlington, VA, 2001.

Afghanistan. The future, they often claim, lies in exactly such low-intensity conflicts, rather than the high-intensity major combat operations (MCO) around which most high-tech transformation proposals turn.[28]

Yet this critique skirts a more fundamental issue: is the transformation thesis valid even for major combat itself? In particular, is it a valid interpretation of the reasons for the quick success and low cost of MCO in Afghanistan or Iraq in 2001–2002 and 2003? Was the conduct of either of these campaigns consistent with the transformation thesis' claims?

I argue below that the answer is no—the transformation thesis is not, in fact, consistent with the actual conduct of either campaign. This suggests that, whatever one thinks of the need for future counterinsurgency or stability and support operations, the network-centric, effects-based operations version of American military transformation is ill-advised. What the evidence from MCO in Afghanistan and Iraq actually shows is that speed and standoff precision will work as claimed only against enemies who lack the skills necessary to evade their effects. Against unskilled enemies, such as the Iraqi military or the indigenous Afghan Taliban, a transformed American military would be highly successful—in fact, it is probably the ideal force for such a job. However, against enemies with at least the combat skills shown by the Taliban's foreign allies in Afghanistan—and especially al-Qaeda—a transformed military could be radically less effective. This suggests that a transformation agenda that trades mass for speed and close combat for standoff precision could be a very risky undertaking in a world where we do not know where or against whom the American military may be called upon to fight.

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28 See, for example, Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone: On War in the Twenty-first Century*, Zenith, St. Paul, MN, 2004; Steven Metz and James Kievet, *The Revolution in Military Affairs and Conflict Short of War*, US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, July 1994, pp. 2–5; A.J. Bacevich, 'Preserving the Well-Bred Horse', *The National Interest*, Fall, 1994, pp. 43–49; and Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, Free Press, New York, 1991.

I present this case in four steps. First, I discuss the conduct of the 2001–2002 campaign in Afghanistan and its consistency with the transformation thesis. I then do the same for the 2003 major combat phase of the war in Iraq. Third, I present an alternative explanation for the low cost and rapid conclusion of these campaigns, and I conclude with some implications of the findings for American defence policy.

Afghanistan and the transformation thesis

The heart of the transformation school's interpretation of Afghanistan is that US airpower used targeting information provided largely by a handful of US special operations forces (SOF) on the ground to destroy the Taliban's military at standoff ranges, before the Taliban could overrun US commandos or the indigenous allies working with them. In this account, it is the precision munitions that are doing the real military work; everything else is there to support standoff firepower delivery. The precision fires are deemed sufficient in themselves to destroy the enemy and enable a collection of ostensibly ragtag local militias to advance.[29] This ability to destroy the enemy by standoff precision is in turn central to the implications of this interpretation for the transformation debate: if Afghanistan shows that standoff precision has made close combat largely unnecessary, then restructuring the military away from the latter and toward the former makes sense.

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29 See the references in note 2 above; also: Michael Gordon, '"New" U.S. War: Commandos, Airstrikes and Allies on the Ground', *New York Times*, 29 December 2001, p. 1; Paul Watson and Richard Cooper, 'Blended Tactics Paved Way for Sudden Collapse', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 November 2001; Thom Shanker, 'Conduct of War is Redefined by Success of Special Forces', *New York Times*, 21 January 2002, p. 1; John Hendren, 'Afghanistan Yields Lessons for Pentagon's Next Targets', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 2002, p. 1; Joseph Fitchett, 'Swift Success for High-Tech Arms', *International Herald Tribune*, 7 December 2001, p. 1; and 'Afghanistan: First Lessons', *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 19 December 2001.

In its early stages, the war mainly went the way transformation proponents assumed it would. US precision took the Taliban by surprise, and their initial dispositions were poorly chosen for protection against such firepower.[30] They typically deployed on exposed ridgelines with little effort at camouflage or concealment. Entrenchments were haphazard, lacking overhead cover for infantry positions or proper emplacements for combat vehicles. As a result, their positions could be identified from often extraordinary distances and, once located, their poor entrenchment and exposed movement made them easy prey for precision weapons.[31]

The result was slaughter. At Bishqab on 21 October 2001, for example, US SOF pinpointed Taliban targets at ranges of over eight kilometres. Sceptical Northern Alliance commanders peered through their binoculars at Taliban positions that had stymied them for years and were astounded to see the defences suddenly vaporised by direct hits from 2000-pound bombs. At Cobaki on 22 October, Taliban observation posts were easily spotted at 1500–2000 metres and annihilated by precision bombing. At Zard Kammar on 28 October, Taliban defences were wiped out from a mile away. At Ac'capruk on 4 November, exposed Taliban combat vehicles and crew-served weapons on hillsides west of the Balkh River were spotted from SOF observation posts on the Koh-i-Almortak ridgeline some 4–5 kilometres distant and obliterated by American airstrikes.

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30 America's opponents in this campaign were not a unitary or monolithic military. Their three main components—the indigenous Afghan Taliban, foreign allies who fought for the Taliban regime, and the subset of these trained in al-Qaeda's infamous camps—had very different military properties and combat performance. 'Taliban' refers collectively to any hostile forces in Afghanistan; 'Afghan Taliban' refers to the indigenous Afghan component; 'Foreign Taliban' refers to all non-Afghan components (both al-Qaeda and non-al-Qaeda); and 'Al-Qaeda' refers exclusively to the forces trained in Osama bin Laden's camps and associated with his organisation. Of these, al-Qaeda were the most capable; the Afghan Taliban the least.

31 The discussion below is based on the more complete account in Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy*, US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, 2002, which provides detailed documentation.

The Taliban were not the only ones surprised by this: some allied Afghans initially thought that the lasers US SOF used to designate bombing targets were actually death rays, since they apparently caused defences to vanish whenever caught in their cross-hairs. Both sides, however, learned fast.

Within days of the first SOF-directed airstrikes, US commandos were already reporting that Taliban vehicles in their sectors had been smeared with mud to camouflage them. By 5 November, the Taliban's al-Qaeda allies were already making aggressive use of overhead cover and concealment. In the fighting north of Kandahar and along Highway 4 in December, al-Qaeda defences were well-camouflaged, dispersed, and making use of natural terrain for expedient cover. This pattern continued through Operation *Anaconda* in March 2002, by which time al-Qaeda forces were practising systematic communications security, dispersal, camouflage discipline, use of cover and concealment, and exploitation of dummy fighting positions to draw fire and attention from their real dispositions. Indigenous Afghan Taliban in the war's early battles were radically exposed, but as the war unfolded the opposition came increasingly to comprise better-trained, more adaptive foreign—and especially al-Qaeda—forces. As these foreign forces adapted their methods, they reduced their vulnerability significantly. As they did so, the war changed character.

Finding hidden targets

Among the more important changes was increasing difficulty in finding targets for precision attack. At Bai Beche on 2–5 November 2001, for example, a mostly al-Qaeda defensive force occupied an old, formerly-Soviet system of deliberate entrenchments. With proper cover and concealment, the defenders were able to prevent US commandos from locating the entirety of their individual fighting positions, many of which could not be singled out for precision attack.

By the time of the December fighting along Highway 4 south of Kandahar, even less information was available. In fact, concealed al-Qaeda defences among a series of culverts and in burned-out vehicle hulks along the roadside remained wholly undetected until their fire drove back an allied advance. An al-Qaeda counterattack in the same sector, using a system of wadis for cover, approached undetected to within 100-200 metres of allied SOF positions along the highway before opening fire on these forces. At the village of Sayed Slim Kalay north of Kandahar, between 2–4 December 2001, concealed al-Qaeda defenders likewise remained undetected until they fired upon unsuspecting US and allied attackers. An al-Qaeda counterattack using local terrain for cover manoeuvred into small-arms range of friendly defenders before being driven back.

At Operation *Anaconda* in March 2002, an intensive pre-battle reconnaissance effort focused every available surveillance and target acquisition system on a tiny, ten-by-ten kilometre battlefield. Yet fewer than 50 per cent of all al-Qaeda positions ultimately identified on this battlefield were discovered prior to ground contact. In fact, most fire received by US forces in *Anaconda* came from initially unseen and unanticipated defenders.

How could such things happen in an era of persistent reconnaissance drones, airborne radars, satellite surveillance, thermal imaging, and hypersensitive electronic eavesdropping equipment? The answer is that the earth's surface remains an extremely complex environment with an abundance of natural and man-made cover available for those militaries capable of exploiting it.

Figure 1: Al-Qaeda fighting position sanger, Takhur Ghar

Figure 1 provides a concrete illustration of this problem in the form of a photograph of an al-Qaeda fighting position from Objective *Ginger* on the *Anaconda* battlefield. The arrow indicates the al-Qaeda defenders' location; without the arrow, there would be no visible sign of a combat position even from the nearly point-blank range at which this photograph was taken. Overhanging rock in turn provides cover and concealment from overhead surveillance systems. In principle, one might hope to observe resupply movement or al-Qaeda patrols into or out of such a position, or to overhear radio communications from its occupants. Al-Qaeda fighters wearing the flowing robes of local herdsmen and travelling in small parties among the mountains, however, are nearly impossible to distinguish at a distance from the non-combatants who tend goats or travel through such areas as a matter of routine. Moreover, defenders able to operate under radio listening silence while communicating using runners, landlines or other non-broadcast means can reduce signals intercepts to a level that

makes identifying specific fighting positions very difficult. Against such targets, it is far from clear that any forthcoming surveillance technology will ensure reliable targeting from standoff distances.

Figure 2: 'The Whale', Shah-i-kot Valley, Afghanistan

Figure 3: Takhur Ghar Mountain, Afghanistan

Nor are such positions rare or atypical of Afghan terrain more generally. Figures 2 and 3 show broader samples of the Shah-i-kot battlefield on which *Anaconda* was fought, including the features known as 'The Whale' (after a similar rock formation at the US National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California) and Objective *Ginger*, respectively. Almost any of the dozens of shadows, crevices, or folds in the earth scattered across these landscapes could house positions like that in Figure 1.

Nor is the problem unique to Afghanistan. Militarily exploitable cover is commonplace in almost any likely theatre of war. For targets who observe radio listening silence, as al-Qaeda now does, foliage degrades all current remote sensor technologies. Urban areas provide overhead cover, create background clutter, and pose difficult problems of distinguishing military targets from innocent civilians. Each is widely available. More than 26 per cent of the land area in Somalia is wooded or urban, as is more than 20 per cent in Sudan, 34 per cent in Georgia, and 46 per cent in the Philippines. In most countries, the central geo-strategic objectives are urban areas; even where the bulk of the national land area is open desert (as in Iraq), the cities are both the key terrain and an ample source of cover (Baghdad alone covers more than 300 square kilometres). The natural complexity of such surfaces offers any adaptive opponent with the necessary training and skills a multitude of opportunities to thwart even modern remote surveillance systems.

Against such opponents, remote surveillance will still detect some targets, and remote sensors remain crucial assets, but the only sure means of target acquisition is direct ground contact: a ground force whose advance threatens objectives that the enemy cannot sacrifice and thus must defend compels them to give away their locations by firing on their attackers. Skilled attackers can eventually locate any defensive position by observing the source of the fire directed at them—and this, in fact, is how the majority of the al-Qaeda positions during *Anaconda* were found.

Close combat in Afghanistan

As the enemy adapted, their decreasing vulnerability to standoff attack meant an increasing burden of close combat. Little of this took the form of guerrilla warfare. At least through *Anaconda* in March 2002, the Taliban sought to take and hold ground in very orthodox ways—they tried to defend key geographic objectives rather than harass their enemies with hit-and-run tactics. These defences, however, were sufficiently covered and concealed to allow important fractions of them to survive American air attack. The resulting ground combat was neither trivial nor wholly one-sided: many battles were close calls, with either initial reverses, serious casualties, or both.

At Bai Beche on 5 November 2002, for example, the dug-in al-Qaeda defenders refused to withdraw after more than two days of heavy US bombing. To dislodge them, Northern Alliance cavalry were ordered to charge the position. The first attempt was driven back. The attached US SOF observed this reverse and began calling renewed airstrikes in anticipation of a second assault. In the process, however, an SOF warning order to the cavalry to prepare for another push was mistaken by the cavalry as a command to launch the assault, with the result that the cavalry began its attack much sooner than intended. The surprised Americans watched the Afghan cavalry break cover and begin their advance just as a series of laser-guided bombs had been released from US aircraft in response to the SOF calls for air support. The SOF commander reported that he was convinced they had just caused a friendly-fire incident: the bomb release and the cavalry advance were too close together for official doctrinal limits, and the airstrike would never have been ordered if the SOF had known that the cavalry was then jumping off for the second assault. As it happened, the bombs landed just seconds before the cavalry arrived. In fact, the cavalry galloped through the enormous cloud of smoke and dust that was still hanging in the air after the explosions, emerging behind enemy defences before their garrison knew what was happening. The

defenders, seeing Northern Alliance cavalry to their rear, abandoned their positions in an attempt to avoid encirclement.

The result was an important victory—in fact it turned the tide in the north. However, the battle involved serious close combat (cavalry overrunning prepared, actively resisting defences), and the outcome was a very close call. The assault profited from an extremely tight integration of movement with suppressive fire—far tighter, in fact, than either the cavalry or their supporting SOF would ever have dared arrange deliberately. Luck thus played an important role in the outcome. The Northern Alliance might well have carried the position eventually even without the good fortune of an extraordinary integration of fire and movement; this was clearly a crucial battle, and they would presumably have redoubled their efforts if the second attempt had failed. But, as fought, the outcome involved an important element of serendipity.

Nor was Bai Beche unique in demanding hard fighting at close quarters. As noted above, al-Qaeda counter-attackers reached small-arms range of US and allied forces before being driven back at Sayed Slim Kalay and at Highway 4. At Konduz in late November, al-Qaeda counter-attackers penetrated allied positions deeply enough to compel supporting US SOF teams to withdraw at least three times to avoid being overrun. In *Anaconda*, allied forces associated with General Mohammed Zia and supported by US SOF were assigned to drive al-Qaeda defenders from the 'Tri-cities' area (the villages of Shirkankeyl, Babakuhl and Marzak); they were instead pinned down under hostile fire from prepared defences in the surrounding mountainsides and eventually withdrew after they proved unable to advance. The al-Qaeda defenders pulled back under joint, multinational attack by allied airpower, Western infantry, and multinational SOF; only then were Zia's troops able to enter the 'Tri-cities' and adjoining ridgelines. At Tora Bora, massive US bombing proved insufficient to compensate for allied Afghan unwillingness to

close with dug-in al-Qaeda defenders in the cave complexes of the White Mountains. This ground force hesitancy probably allowed Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants to escape into neighbouring Pakistan.

Among these examples, the fighting along Highway 4 in December 2001 is particularly instructive. The US-allied Afghans here were divided amongst two factions. The first, commanded by Haji Gul Alai, were very capable troops by Afghan standards. They used terrain for cover and concealment, maintained good intervals between elements in the advance, moved by alternate bounds, exploited suppressive fire to cover moving elements' exposure, and were able to exploit the effects of US airstrikes by coordinating their movement with the bombing (which many Afghan factions could not). The second faction, by contrast, was much less skilled: the attached SOF commander characterised them as 'an armed mob—just villagers given weapons'. Their tactics consisted of exposed, bunched-up movement in the open, with no attempt to use terrain to reduce their exposure, and little ability to employ supporting or suppressive fires. At the Arghestan Bridge on 5 December 2002, this second faction launched an assault on a dug-in al-Qaeda position south of the Kandahar airport. Driven back repeatedly, they proved unable to take the position, despite US air support. Only after these troops were withdrawn and Haji Gul Alai's forces took over the assault the following day could the al-Qaeda positions be taken.

Of course, the alliance ultimately ousted the Taliban. Precision US airpower was a necessary precondition for this—together with its SOF spotters, this airpower turned a stalemated civil war into a dramatic battlefield victory for America and its allies. But while precision bombing was *necessary*, it was not *sufficient*. It could annihilate poorly-prepared fighting positions, and it could inflict heavy losses on even well-disposed defences. However, it could not destroy the entirety of properly-prepared positions by itself and, unless such positions are all but annihilated, even a handful of surviving, actively-

resisting defenders with modern automatic weapons can slaughter unsophisticated indigenous allies whose idea of tactics is to walk forward bunched up in the open. To overcome skilled, resolute defenders who have adopted the standard countermeasures to high-firepower airstrikes still requires close combat by friendly ground forces, whose own skills are sufficient to enable them to use local cover and their own suppressive fire to advance against hostile survivors with modern weapons.

By and large, America's main Afghan allies in this war either enjoyed such fundamental skills or profited from accidentally tight coordination of their movement and American fires (as at Bai Beche) or both. The Northern and (later) the Southern Alliances were not uniformly the motley assortment of militiamen they are sometimes portrayed as. Enough of them were capable of modern military tactics to allow them to exploit the tremendous potential that precision airpower can bring to armies capable of integrating their movement with its firepower.

But not all of America's allies in this war were up to this job. Though the typical combat units on each side were about equally matched (as the stalled pre-intervention battlelines imply), both sides in Afghanistan were actually diverse mixtures of better- and worse-trained, more- and less-motivated troops—and this diversity offers a couple of valuable opportunities to observe instances of unequally-skilled forces in combat. In such unequal fights as the first day at Arghestan Bridge and the assault on the 'Tri-cities' in *Anaconda*, the results suggest that, where the indigenous allies are overmatched tactically, US airpower and SOF support alone may not be enough to turn the tide. In Afghanistan, the Northern and Southern Alliances (eventually combined with the US and Canadian infantry that fought *Anaconda*) together provided significant ground forces that ultimately shouldered an essential load of old-fashioned close combat against surviving, actively resisting opponents. Even with twenty-first-century

firepower, without this essential close combat capability the outcome in Afghanistan could easily have been very different.

Iraq and the transformation thesis

The transformation school's interpretation of major combat in Operation *Iraqi Freedom* focuses on US speed, precision, and situational awareness. These are held to account for the campaign's quick conclusion and low casualties by leaving the Iraqis unable or unwilling to inflict significant losses: much of Iraq's military refused to fight against such overwhelming technology, and those who did were destroyed by standoff precision strike before they could pose a real threat to Coalition ground forces. Iraqi threats of 'scorched earth', moreover, were pre-empted by the speed of the Coalition advance: Iraqi oilfields, ports and bridges were overrun before Saddam Hussein's forces could destroy them. Much of the emphasis on speed, particularly in the post-2003 defence planning debate, stems from this interpretation of its role in Hussein's fall. The apparent role of standoff precision in limiting Coalition losses gave further impetus to the transformation argument that had already been strengthened by the conventional interpretation of the Afghan campaign.[32]

Yet while speed, precision and situational awareness were surely helpful, they were far from sufficient to explain the low cost of Saddam Hussein's ouster. To see why, I will consider in turn the role of close combat, and the aversion of 'scorched earth', in the major combat phase of the war in Iraq.

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32 See references in note 2 above; also: Tom Bowman, 'Rumsfeld Taunting but Naysayers Persist', *Baltimore Sun*, 18 May 2003; Sonni Efron, 'Pentagon Officials Defend Iraq Battle Strategy', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 May 2003; Esther Schrader, 'Official Ties Iraq's Troubles to U.S. Success', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 July 2003; Usha Lee McFarling, 'The Eyes and Ears of War', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 April 2003; and Terry McCarthy, 'What ever Happened to the Republican Guard?', *Time*, 12 May 2003.

Close combat in Iraq

The logic of the transformation account of the Coalition's low MCO casualty rate implies that Coalition losses were averted by avoiding close combat—by reducing the scale of close-quarters fighting against willing combatants on favourable ground to the point where heavy casualties could not be inflicted. Yet there was actually significant close combat in Iraq against Iraqi fighters on urban terrain who proved willing to take extraordinary risks to kill Americans and Britons—certainly there was far too much close combat to accept explanations that turn on its ostensible infrequency.

The key here is urban warfare. Urban terrain is ordinarily thought highly defence-favourable; defenders in cities should be able to fight at a considerable tactical advantage. The basis for most pre-war fears of heavy Coalition casualties in conventional combat was concern with urban warfare.[33] In fact, there was substantial close combat in Iraqi cities during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

In Baghdad, for example, when the 3rd Infantry's 2nd Brigade launched its 'thunder run' into the city on 5 April 2003, it met a fusillade of Iraqi RPG and small-arms fire—at point-blank range—along nearly its entire route. Every single vehicle in the brigade column was hit at least once by Iraqi RPGs, and many took multiple hits. Two days later, on 7 April, when the brigade advanced from the city outskirts to the Tigris, it again took heavy fire from all directions.

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33 See, for example, Dave Moniz, John Diamond, and David J. Lynch, 'A Virtual Certainty: Baghdad Falls. What's Uncertain: Cost of the Fight', *USA Today*, 4 April 2003, pp. 1Aff.; Michael R. Gordon, 'Iraq Strategy is Seen as Delay and Urban Battle', *New York Times*, 16 February 2003, pp. 1ff.; idem, 'Hussein's Likely Plan: Make a Stand in Baghdad', *New York Times*, 4 March 2003, pp. A12ff.; Dave Moniz, 'How the War Against Iraq Could Unfold', *USA Today*, 21 February 2003, pp. 1Aff.; Mike Allen, 'U.S. Increases Estimated Cost of War in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 26 February 2003, pp. A19ff.; Tom Bowman, 'U.S. Plan for Iraq', *Baltimore Sun*, 24 February 2003, pp. 1Aff.; John Daniszewski, 'U.S. Risks a Long War if it Invades, Iraqis Warn', *Los Angeles Times*, 8 March 2003, pp. 1ff.; and Tom Squitieri, 'What Could Go Wrong', *USA Today*, 13 March 2003, pp. 1Aff.

Opposition was especially intense at highway overpasses and key intersections; Iraqi positions in these locations were destroyed but subsequently re-occupied by fighters who infiltrated back behind the moving American columns. An emergency resupply convoy sent forward from the airport after nightfall had to fight its way through to the brigade perimeter on the Tigris; it lost one ammunition and two fuel trucks in a wild ride through a series of desperate fire fights, suffering two soldiers killed and 30 wounded en route. The next morning, the brigade was counterattacked by waves of paramilitaries hanging from the sides of some 50–100 civilian vehicles and firing small arms and RPGs as they poured over the Tigris River bridges toward the brigade perimeter.[34] When 3rd Brigade entered Baghdad from the north, it too fought its way through volleys of massed RPGs fired from practically point-blank range; every armoured vehicle in 3rd Brigade suffered either a hit or a near miss from RPGs while fighting their way into the city.[35]

Similarly, in Nasiriyah Iraqi paramilitaries and elements of the 11th Regular Army division waged a week-long urban battle against the Marine Corps' Task Force *Tarawa*, a reinforced three-battalion regimental-scale formation. In Samawah, Iraqi paramilitaries fought for a week against, in turn, the Army's 3/7 Cavalry, the 3rd Brigade of the 3rd Infantry division, and the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne division. In Najaf, urban warfare in and around the city centre continued for more than a week, tying down in series multiple brigades of US infantry.[36]

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34 US Army Military History Institute, Strategic Studies Institute, Operation Iraqi Freedom Research Collection, henceforth MHI: Tape 050203p1sb COL Perkins et al. interview; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Walter interview; Tape 050203a1io and Tape 050203a2sb, LTC Bayer et al. interview.

35 MHI: Tape 050303a1sb COL Allyn et al. interview. Some British Challenger tanks took as many as 7–9 RPG hits during their own 'thunder runs' in Basra: Tape 050803a2sb MAJ Longman et al. interview.

36 See, for example, MHI: Tape 042903p2sb LTC Kerl et al. interview; Tape 043003p2io COL Johnson interview; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Walter interview; Tape 050303p2sb, LTC Ferrell et al. interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al.

The exact strength of the willing, surviving Iraqi opposition in these and other urban battles cannot be known, but it was clearly enough to produce a major volume of potentially lethal fires at very close quarters. Perhaps 30 000 Iraqi paramilitaries were pre-deployed in Baghdad, Basra, Najaf and Nasiriyah before the war. Another 15 000 Special Republican Guard (SRG) members were pre-deployed in Baghdad and its suburbs. Some 10 000 paramilitary reinforcements were moved south from Baghdad into Nasiriyah and Najaf after it became clear that major battles were underway there for control of the bridges running through these cities.[37] SRG infantry and paramilitaries in mostly civilian clothing were poor targets for Coalition deep strikes, which were aimed chiefly at Iraqi leadership, command, air defence, and heavy weapons targets. While paramilitary losses were heavy in close combat with Coalition forces, there is little evidence to suggest that they suffered much attrition prior to contact with invaders on the ground. Combat motivation, while very weak in Iraqi Regular Army and some Republican Guard units,[38] was stronger elsewhere—and especially among paramilitary fighters in Iraqi cities. In fact, paramilitary combat motivation bordered on the suicidal in 2003. In Nasiriyah, Samawah, Basra, Najaf, Baghdad and elsewhere, Iraqi paramilitaries executed repeated frontal assaults against US armoured vehicles using civilian sport utility vehicles, pickup trucks, minivans,

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interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha Kuwait; Tape 050203p1sb COL Perkins et al. interview.

37 MHI: Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Tape 042903p1sb COL Brown et al. interview; Tape 050303a1sb COL Allyn et al interview. In Baghdad, an estimated 1000–2000 paramilitaries were killed in 2nd Brigade's two 'thunder runs' alone: Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Walter interview; Tape 050203a1io LTC Bayer et al. interview.

38 Note, however, that Coalition speed was not necessarily responsible for this: most of the Iraqi Regular Army had little will to fight even before the war began, much less after they observed the Coalition's rate of advance: see, e.g., MHI: Tape 042403a2sb MAJ al Tamimi interview; Tape 042303a2sb St. COL al Saadi interview; Tape 042503a1sb LTC al Hasnawi interview; Tape 042403p1sb LTC al Araghi interview; Tape 042503a1sb COL al Sanabi interview; Tape 042503a1 COL Delfi interview; Tape 042303p0sb, LTC Kadhim interview; Tape 042403a1sb LTC Hamid interview; Memorandum for the record, LTC Rodgers, LTC Marcoz interview, 22 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait.

and even bicycles. In Samawah, Iraqi sport utility vehicles rammed American armoured vehicles. Even after initial waves of such kamikaze charges were mowed down, others followed. In Baghdad, Iraqi reinforcements re-occupied devastated positions to resume resistance after US columns drove on. Iraqi defenders of Nasiriyah and Samawah kept fighting long after being bypassed by American spearheads. Basra's garrison held out through a two-week siege until defeated by a British variant of the Baghdad 'thunder runs'; multiple British armoured columns drove into the urban centre and broke the resistance by direct fire. This is inconsistent with a model that Iraqi forces were too mal-deployed, or too demoralised by Coalition speed or precision, to offer meaningful resistance.[39]

Of course, none of this is to suggest that either Iraqi paramilitaries or SRG infantry were a serious threat to halt the Coalition advance; even at full strength, neither had much chance of holding Iraq's cities against a determined assault. The 'thunder runs' in Baghdad and Basra do appear to have broken the defenders' morale once it became clear to them that their best efforts were proving futile. Speed, precision, and situational awareness did leave much of the Iraqi military out of position, unwilling to fight, or destroyed by deep strikes.

Yet what was left—that the Iraqis did manage to get into close combat with Coalition ground forces on favourable, urban terrain—was in principle more than enough to have caused much heavier Coalition casualties. The 'thunder runs' in Baghdad alone received a volume of fire that, with historical loss rates, might have been expected to have devastated at least two brigades of Coalition forces. Before the war, the Marines estimated that, even with maximum proficiency, their

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39 MHI: Tape 050203p1sb LTC Schwartz et al. interview; Tape 050303a1sb COL Allyn et al. interview; Tape 050303p1sb, LTC Pease interview; Tape 050303p1io MAJ Walter et al. interview; Tape 050303p2sb, LTC Ferrell et al. interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview; Tape 050203p1sb COL Perkins et al. interview; Tape 050803a1sb MAJ Maciejewski interview; Tape 050803a2sb MAJ Longman et al. interview; Tape 050803a2sb CPT Ryan interview.

own troops could expect no better than about a 1:1 loss exchange ratio in offensive urban warfare.[40] If the surviving, actively resisting components of the Iraqi paramilitary and SRG in Iraq's cities had comprised even 10 percent of their pre-war totals, an exchange ratio like this could easily have increased Coalition losses by a factor of 10 or more. That these losses did not occur is thus hard to attribute solely to speed, precision, and situational awareness. While helpful, these capabilities did not in themselves preclude a volume of urban close combat that would normally be expected to yield much heavier casualties.

'Scorched Earth' in Iraq

Transformation advocates have argued that speed prevented the Iraqis from destroying the Rumaila oil field, sabotaging the port facilities at Umm Qasr, blowing up the primary bridges over the Tigris and Euphrates, or flooding the Karbala Gap.[41] Yet there is substantial evidence to suggest that Coalition speed was less important than Iraqi choices for these outcomes. Properly wired bridges, oil wells, pipelines, cranes or levees can be blown up in seconds from safe locations, with the pressing of a single button. Secure landline cables connecting switchboxes with explosives would make such commands very difficult to interdict. Pre-delegated detonation authority could have afforded local commanders the ability to beat invaders to the punch even if unable to communicate with Baghdad. Had the Iraqis taken such precautions, massive damage could have occurred in seconds—long before even the fastest invasion could have reached them—and it was not in our power to prevent them from doing this if they had so otherwise chosen.

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40 In a series of experiments at George Air Force Base in California, for example, Marine infantry units suffered some 100 casualties to defeat a force of 160 defenders in mock urban combat: Greg Jaffe, 'Urban Warfare', *Desert News*, 1 September 2002, pp. AA02ff.; Scott Peterson, 'Iraq Prepares for Urban Warfare', *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 October 2002, pp. 1ff. Of course, much depends on the defenders' skills; on variance in urban warfare casualty levels as a function of defender skill levels; see, for example, Daryl G. Press, 'How to Take Baghdad', *New York Times*, 26 March 2003, p. A17.

41 See references in notes 2 and 9 above.

Of course, they did not. Far from it; in fact, the Iraqis did remarkably little to implement Saddam Hussein's threat of 'scorched earth'. They neither prepared their infrastructure for destruction on more than a token scale, nor were they in the process of doing so, either before the war or during the fighting. On the contrary, some key facilities were left in their possession for weeks after the fighting actually began, yet were left undamaged and found unprepared for demolition when Coalition forces finally captured them. It is hard to see how the difference between the fast and a slower Coalition advance would have been decisive when even weeks of time could pass without the Iraqis implementing threats that could, in principle, have been realised in fractions of that time, and yet were not. At the margin, speed may have made adequate preparation harder for the Iraqis, but it could not make it impossible, and it does not appear to have been the main reason why the threat was not carried out.

Consider, for example, the issue of oil field destruction. Of the more than 250 wells in the Rumaila oil field, only 22 had actually been prepared for demolition when the Marines secured the field on 21 March 2003. Of these 22, only nine were actually detonated, causing just seven fires. No gas-oil separation plants, pumping stations or pipelines were wired for destruction. Nor was there evidence of ongoing efforts at preparing additional wells or other oil field facilities for destruction in the days before the invasion or during the early stages of the invasion itself. Twenty-two wells had been prepared for demolition in advance of the war; then the Iraqis stopped and did not significantly expand their preparations either just before or during the war's initial stages. Even after the war began, and even with a very fast-moving offensive, there were still some 48 hours available to the Iraqis between the beginning of hostilities and the time that the field was actually secured—they had considerable, but

unused, time for setting charges or destroying additional facilities even after they knew the war was on.[42]

In fact, the Kirkuk oil field in the north remained in Iraqi hands for more than three weeks after the invasion began. Yet at no point in that interval were any oil wells destroyed, or any facilities demolished, or any fires set. No evidence of preparation for demolition was discovered when US troops finally took possession of the field after 7 April 2003; in fact, dirt had been piled around a number of wells to protect them from accidental destruction in the fighting.[43] Even if one were to argue that the Iraqis would have demolished Rumaila if they had only been given more time, at Kirkuk they had the time—by any standard.[44] Yet they did less demolition at Kirkuk than at Rumaila.

There are many possible explanations for the Iraqis' lack of preparation, ranging from disobedience by oil field workers to organisational incompetence in the Iraqi military to a lack of intent at the highest levels; perhaps the threat of 'scorched earth' was merely a bluff to deter an attack. Either way though, none of these possibilities are consistent with a claim that only a fast-moving advance prevented mass destruction of the Iraqi oil industry. None implies a process that would have yielded significantly wider destruction if the campaign had lasted weeks or even months longer than it did. If time were all the Iraqis needed, then, at a minimum, Kirkuk should have been razed. Yet it was not.

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42 MHI: Memorandum for the record, CW4 Crowder interview, 12 May 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Earnshaw interview, 8 May 2003, 1st UK Armored Division HQ, Basra, Iraq.

43 MHI: Tape 062403p1sb LTC K interview; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview; Memorandum for the record, CW4 Crowder interview, 12 May 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait.

44 In 1991, Iraqi engineers wired Kuwaiti oil fields for destruction in about a month of work performed during the fighting itself: Memorandum for the record, CW4 Crowder interview, 12 May 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait.

Iraqi bridges, port facilities, and inundation follow a similar pattern. The Coalition advance was obviously premised on its ability to use a series of key bridges over the Euphrates River. The towns at these crossings were in fact major battlefields in the war, as the Iraqis apparently understood their importance and sought to contest the bridge sites. Yet few of these bridges were wired for demolition, and even fewer were actually destroyed. At Nasiriyah, the Iraqis fought a week-long battle for a city whose military importance turned on its bridges—yet the Iraqis made no systematic effort to destroy them.[45] Of the five bridges surrounding Basra, only one was wired, and none were actually destroyed.[46] At Objective *Peach* south of Baghdad, the key bridge was found wired for demolition, but unbroken.[47] The key port of Umm Qasr, critical to the potential prosperity of post-war Iraq, was undamaged in the war and captured intact by Coalition forces, even though the Iraqis held the port and its facilities for two days prior to its capture and could have done extensive damage had they used this time to do so.[48] American commanders had worried that the Iraqis would flood the Karbala Gap, a key choke point on the road to Baghdad and a potentially promising target for Iraqi WMD use against stalled Coalition ground forces. Yet nothing of the kind happened—the closest the Iraqis came to deliberate flooding was some small-scale tactical inundation in the Subiyat Depression near Nasiriyah.[49]

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45 For example by targeting them for artillery or mortar fire after losing them to American control, let alone by effective pre-capture demolition. MHI: Tape 042903p2sb LTC Kerl et al. interview; Tape 043003p2io COL Johnson interview.

46 MHI: Tape 050803a2sb MAJ Longman et al. interview.

47 One span was dropped, but the bridge remained trafficable. MHI: Tape 050203a1io LTC Bayer et al. interview; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview. On the survival of most Iraqi bridges, see Memorandum for the record, MAJ Stephenson interview, 30 April 2003, I MEF HQ, Hillah, Iraq.

48 The author inspected the port facilities on 25 April 2003 and found no evidence of damage. Captured Iraqi officers maintain that orders to destroy the port would not have been followed—the commanders at the scene viewed the facilities as the patrimony of the Iraqi people and not as tools for defending Saddam Hussein: MHI: Tape 042403a1sb LTC Hamid interview.

49 MHI: Tape 042803p1sb MG Marks, COL Rotkoff interview.

An alternative explanation

The transformation school's implications are thus at odds with important elements of the actual conduct of the 2001–2002 and 2003 campaigns. In particular, there was too much close combat in either campaign for standoff precision alone to explain the Coalition's low loss rate. Moreover, Saddam Hussein's failure to impose higher costs via 'scorched earth' had little to do with Coalition speed or technology. What, then, was responsible?

Part of the answer lies in the idiosyncratic features of Ba'athist Iraq: the Iraqis' failure to destroy oilfields and other economic infrastructure, for example, was ultimately their choice. Either Saddam Hussein never meant to carry out this threat, or his people refused to follow his orders, or his organisation proved unable to implement his plan. Yet the failure of 'scorched earth' was less our doing than theirs—even a different or less capable Coalition military might still have averted 'scorched earth', given the Iraqis' apparent unwillingness to carry out their threat, and even a very capable Coalition would have failed if the Iraqis had been able and willing to follow through.

Much of the answer, however, lies in the interaction between our strengths and their particular weaknesses.[50] Technology's performance depends heavily on its targets' behaviour; armies who present massed, exposed targets against twenty-first-century firepower suffer gravely for their error. However, armies who can reduce their exposure and fight effectively from dispersed, concealed positions pose much tougher targets—targets that are very difficult to destroy through standoff precision fires alone. The indigenous Afghan Taliban of 2001

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50 Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004, presents a more general treatment of this argument in broader historical context and with a more systematic formal theoretical exposition—but without the discussion of the current engagement in Iraq, which postdates the book's publication.

and the Iraqi military of 2003 presented precisely the kind of massed, exposed targets against which modern technology can reach proving-ground lethality levels. When weapons' proving-ground lethality is as great as that of today, the results can be extremely one-sided. An exposed enemy thus enabled the Afghan Taliban to be destroyed at standoff ranges, almost without close combat. While urban terrain enabled Iraqi paramilitaries and SRG to avoid annihilation from standoff distances, their radically exposed close-combat tactics made it possible for even a small, but well-equipped, Western ground force to annihilate them in close combat at very low cost to itself. By contrast, the same precision-strike technology that wiped out exposed indigenous Afghan Taliban from standoff range proved insufficient to do the same against better-trained, less-exposed al-Qaeda opponents in actions such as Bai Beche, Sayed Slim Kalay, Highway 4, or Operation *Anaconda*. There is every reason to expect that a more skilled Iraqi opponent in 2003 would have posed much greater challenges than the exposed enemies faced by the Coalition in the actual event.

Iraqi ineptitude in 2003

To see why, it is useful to review some of the more serious of the Iraqis' many military shortcomings in 2003, and how these interacted with particular Coalition strengths. Perhaps the most serious Iraqi shortcoming was their systematic failure to exploit the military potential of urban terrain. Cities offer a natural source of cover and concealment, they canalise attacks, they facilitate barrier construction, they pose difficult problems of intermingling and collateral damage avoidance, and they make effective employment of standoff precision weapons much harder. The most plausible pre-war scenario for heavy Coalition casualties was the prospect of prolonged urban battles in the streets of Baghdad, Tikkrit, Najaf, Nasiriyah, Samawah, Basra, Mosul, or Kirkuk.

Yet the Republican Guard and Iraqi Regular Army systematically avoided major cities, deploying instead in rural areas and suburban outskirts. They appear to have been deliberately denied access to major city centres by the Iraqi high command.[51]

The great majority of the true urban combat in Operation *Iraqi Freedom* was against lightly-armed irregular paramilitaries, who fought mostly on the tactical offensive, sallying out into the open to charge Coalition armoured vehicles. Not only did the paramilitaries lack the heavy weapons or armour protection of Iraq's large mechanised formations, they also forfeited the tactical potential of urban terrain by taking the offensive in exposed, unprepared frontal assaults.[52]

More-conventional SRG units deployed some heavy weapons, especially in Baghdad, but these were a tiny fraction of the total available to the Iraqi military. Even the SRG failed systematically to make effective use of urban terrain for their employment. The SRG's prepared positions were almost entirely outdoors, typically in shallow foxholes dug along the roadside or in sample sandbag emplacements on building roofs or at intersections (a typical example from downtown Baghdad is illustrated in Figure 4). SRG tanks were often simply parked in the open at major intersections, with no effort at cover or concealment (see, for example, the T-72 in Figure 5).

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51 MHI: Tape 042303p2sb Staff Brigadier Sajid interview; Tape 050403p1io LTC Sterling interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview.

52 MHI: Tape 050203p1sb LTC Schwartz et al. interview; Tape 050303a1sb COL Allyn et al. interview; Tape 050303p1sb, LTC Pease interview; Tape 050303p1io MAJ Walter et al. interview; Tape 050303p2sb, LTC Ferrell et al. interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview; Tape 050203p1sb COL Perkins et al. interview; Tape 050803a1sb MAJ Maciejewski interview; Tape 050803a2sb MAJ Longman et al. interview.

Figure 4: Iraqi infantry fighting position, Baghdad

Figure 5: Iraqi T-72, Baghdad

Practically no buildings received the interior preparations that would be normal for urban warfare in Western practice, such as interior barricades, wall reinforcement, loophole construction, or wire

entanglements. Outdoor obstacles, barriers, or minefields were almost completely absent.[53]

This systematic failure to exploit urban terrain may be attributable to poor training; the Republican Guard and Iraqi Regular Army had received no instruction whatsoever in urban warfare in the years leading up to the war.[54] In fact, Guard and Army commanders found the entire concept of city fighting unthinkable in 2003. As one Iraqi colonel put it: ‘Why would anyone want to fight in a city?’ His troops ‘couldn’t defend themselves in cities’.[55] Only the SRG was given any systematic training in conventional urban warfare, and even this was poor quality. The paramilitaries who shouldered much of the burden of actual city fighting in 2003 received no sustained conventional military training of any kind.[56]

Urban warfare and the interaction of Iraqi shortcomings and Coalition strengths

The Iraqis’ failure to exploit the potential offered by urban terrain enabled the Coalition’s close combat technology—together with very skilled employment—to annihilate Iraqi urban defenders at very low cost to the Coalition attackers, even without standoff precision engagement. In particular, the modern armour technology of the M1 Abrams and Challenger tanks offered extraordinary protection, and their fire suppression, blast localisation, and crew escape systems

53 MHI: Tape 050203p1sb LTC Schwartz et al. interview; Tape 050303a1sb COL Allyn et al. interview; Tape 050303p1sb, LTC Pease interview; Tape 050303p1io MAJ Walter et al. interview; Tape 050303p2sb, LTC Ferrell et al. interview; Tape 042903p2sb LTC Kerl et al. interview; Tape 043003a1io COL Toolan et al. interview; Tape 043003p2io COL Johnson interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait; Tape 050103p2sb MAJ Robert Walter interview; Tape 050203a2sb LTC Bayer interview; Tape 050203p1sb COL Perkins et al. interview; Tape 050803a2sb MAJ Longman et al. interview.

54 MHI: Tape 042303p2sb Staff Brigadier Sajid interview.

55 MHI: Tape 042403a2sb St. COL al Saadi interview.

56 MHI: Tape 042403a1sb LTC Hamid interview; Memorandum for the record, MAJ Colligan et al. interview, 26 April 2003, CFLCC HQ, Camp Doha, Kuwait.

often made it possible to survive even a large-calibre penetration of the armour envelope. The ability of Bradley Fighting Vehicles as well as Abrams tanks to shoot on the move with both accuracy and tremendous volumes of fire made them extremely lethal even to hostile armoured vehicles, much less paramilitary foot soldiers. For the latter to launch themselves in frontal assaults at such well-protected, highly lethal targets with nothing more than civilian pickup trucks and RPGs was clearly suicidal. Even where the paramilitaries fought on the tactical defence, as in their resistance to 2nd Brigade Combat Team's 'thunder runs' in Baghdad, the combination of the paramilitaries' shortcomings and the Americans' lethality meant that tremendous numbers of Iraqis would be mowed down. Without adequate cover or concealment once firing had given them away, Iraqi paramilitaries were dangerously exposed. Moreover, whereas the Iraqis' fire often missed, Coalition return fire was both voluminous and deadly accurate—exposed paramilitaries thus rarely survived to fire again.

Yet there is every reason to believe that better trained Iraqis could have produced a very different outcome even with exactly the same equipment on both sides. The light weapons wielded by Iraqi irregulars can penetrate M1 Abrams and Challenger tanks—in fact, at least nine M1 Abrams were disabled by RPG fire in Operation *Iraqi Freedom*.[57] If the hundreds of RPGs fired at 2nd Brigade Combat Team in the two 'thunder runs' alone had been fired accurately, the penetration rate could have been dramatically higher. Moreover, if the shooters had been firing from covered, concealed positions, they could reasonably have expected to survive their first shot at a much higher rate, enabling them to shoot again and thus increasing the hit rate even further.
Most important though, a skilled urban defender could not have been broken by an all-mounted assault of the sort waged in Baghdad and Basra. The Iraqis of 2003 were exposed and could thus often be slaughtered in the open even within the city centre without the

57 MAJ Jeffrey R. Voigt et al., V Corps Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) Out Brief, US Army Acquisition Corps, 28 April 2003.

attacker dismounting from their armoured vehicles. By contrast, a defender who exploited the natural potential of urban terrain by remaining in cover to fire from within buildings, who prepared those buildings for maximum cover and concealment, who used barriers and obstacles to canalise attacks into prepared ambushes, and who used covered retreat routes to slip away for subsequent engagements a couple of blocks away, would have proved a much tougher target. Historically, it has proved impossible to destroy such urban defenders without supporting armoured advances with dismounted infantry who can enter building interiors to clear rooms, kill concealed defenders, and hold the building interiors to prevent their reoccupation by defenders. Mounted vehicle crews simply cannot find properly-concealed defenders in building interiors. Unless such defenders are cleared before the armoured vehicles advance, every vehicle's weaker roof, rear, and flank armour surfaces risk easy penetration from bypassed but unseen defenders. Working together, skilled dismounted infantry and supporting armour can clear urban terrain, but they cannot do so cheaply if the defender makes the most of that terrain: even with skilled attackers, and even with armoured support, dismounted building clearance against skilled defenders has typically been very costly. Recent exercises by the USMC have suggested that, against skilled urban defenders, even well-trained attackers might expect little better than a 1:1 loss exchange ratio.[58] Such a loss ratio against multiple thousands of Iraqi urban defenders would have produced thousands of friendly casualties and a fundamentally different outcome for Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, despite the technological advantages of the M1 Abrams and Challenger tanks.

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58 Greg Jaffe, 'Urban Warfare', *Desert News*, 1 September 2002, pp. AA02ff.; Scott Peterson, 'Iraq Prepares for Urban Warfare', *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 October 2002, pp. 1ff.

Conclusions and Implications

The radically low cost of ousting the Taliban and Saddam Hussein thus cannot be explained by reference to Coalition strengths alone. Speed, standoff precision, and situational awareness all surely contributed to these outcomes, and some combination of these may be sufficient to account for the ousting of Saddam Hussein or the Taliban *per se*. But it is not their ousting as such that made these campaigns influential for the subsequent debate—it was the radically low cost and apparent ease of these campaigns that has fuelled the case for transformation. Neither speed, precision, nor situational awareness were sufficient to prevent Iraq, for example, from waging enough close combat, at point-blank range under nominally favourable conditions, to have caused much higher Coalition casualties if Iraq's fighters had been tactically proficient. The Coalition strengths did not prevent Iraq from carrying out Saddam Hussein's threat of 'scorched earth', which was more a result of Iraqi choices than Coalition capabilities. Thus, to explain this outcome requires an interaction effect between Coalition strengths and enemy weaknesses—in particular, a synergy between advanced Coalition technology and a major skill imbalance.

This is not to say that speed was a bad idea, or that either precision or situational awareness are undesirable. Moreover, with hindsight, it seems unlikely that the Iraqis would have torched their oil fields or destroyed their ports with more time, but this could not have been known at the time. A rapid advance made sense given the credible possibility that Saddam Hussein might carry out such threats. Both precision and situational awareness were important contributors to the aggregate technological sophistication needed to exploit the enemy's mistakes in both campaigns.

Many factors thus contributed to success and the above analysis should not be taken as a critique of those pre-war planners who

operated with far less than the 20:20 hindsight available to post-war analysts. However, not all contributors to the outcomes of these campaigns were equally important, and the difference matters, especially in post-war hindsight. Views of past wars always shape future policies, and views on the relative importance of contributing causes can have serious post-war policy implications. It makes a difference which contributors mattered most. In particular, it would be a serious mistake to overestimate technology or speed's contribution, and to underestimate the importance of the skill differential, as does much of the current debate on the war. Getting the relative importance of these factors wrong can lead to at least two serious dangers.

First, it could lead to a mistaken assumption that precision and situational awareness can produce similar results against other opponents with better skills than those of either the Iraqis or the indigenous Afghan Taliban. Even with skilled forces of our own, this is a risky proposition. In 2001 and 2003, our technology could operate at near-proving-ground effectiveness against exposed, ill-prepared opponents. Enemies who do a better job of exploiting the natural complexity of the earth's surface for cover and concealment pose much tougher targets—as al-Qaeda (as opposed to the indigenous Afghan Taliban) showed in Afghanistan. Our technology's performance is strongly affected by the nature of its targets, and the Afghan Taliban and Iraqi military's targets were extremely permissive. If we overlook this, we could thus exaggerate our technology's potential against better skilled enemies.

Second, misunderstanding the causality in Afghanistan and Iraq could lead to a mistaken assumption that speed can substitute for mass and that standoff precision can substitute for close combat capability. If speed were sufficient to explain these campaigns' outcomes (either alone or in conjunction with precision), and if speed and mass are antithetical, then reducing mass to enable greater speed would make sense. But if speed was **not** sufficient, and if unskilled enemies were

necessary to produce the apparent successes of standoff precision in 2001 and 2003, then to trade speed for mass in US force structure would be a dangerous bargain. Against enemies like Iraq or the indigenous Afghan Taliban, small, fast-moving ground forces with massive standoff firepower and excellent situational awareness may well succeed again—in fact, against such foes this could well be the optimum solution. Yet if future warfare pits us against better-skilled opponents, then a small but agile US ground force could find itself unable to cope with concealed, covered enemies in numbers too great to overcome without mass of our own.

And this in turn suggests that the common use of Iraq and Afghanistan as evidence to fuel transformation proposals is often mistaken. The ineptitude of the militaries of both Saddam Hussein and the Taliban played an important role in the low cost of MCO. If we cannot guarantee such inept enemies in the future, then we must be cautious in drawing implications from this conflict for force planning.

Chapter 6

Looking through the Keyhole: Future War in Cities

Alice Hills

Precisely what conventional military operations on urban terrain will look like in 2025 is impossible to predict, but the fact that operations in 2005 were remarkably similar to those conducted in previous decades suggests that differences could be superficial rather than fundamental. Just as the 1990s were a time of peacekeeping operations, so the 2010s may prove to be a decade of urban operations. Not only are cities the destination point for terrorists, insurgents and other extremists, but rapid rates of urbanisation and demographic change in the South (where most contemporary conflict occurs) also suggest that cities will be the site of many future challenges to the West.[59] This matters because urban military operations are notoriously challenging, both technically and politically.

Operations in urban terrain may or may not be a distinct or unique type of action, but cities (the archetypal urban terrain) undoubtedly have a critical effect on the operations taking place within them. Cities represent a human-centric environment that interacts with militaries in a way that jungles, deserts and mountains do not. As a result, the urban environment magnifies and intensifies all military challenges. Further, not only are cities a multidimensional blend of man-made forms imposed on natural relief, they are also rarely empty—they consist not only of physical features, but also a population and the infrastructure that joins the two together. In other words, they are not

59 'South' refers to those countries outside or only partly integrated into the main North American, West European and East Asian transnational economic systems.

neutral environments that can or should be treated as a purely technical, tactical challenge.

Despite this, Western commanders and governments usually analyse urban operations as if tactical issues are both necessary and sufficient for strategic success. Urban operations are typically assessed in a reductionist and mechanistic manner that treats them as a mechanical concern. The West's industrial bias usually ensures that visions of a technology-driven 'revolution in military affairs' take priority over analyses of the strategic or political problems—or potential—of operating in cities. There is no shortage of initiatives addressing the tactical challenges of urban operations, but their strategic and operational implications are invariably neglected even though the West's record of translating tactical success into strategic achievement is mixed: witness the record of US-led forces in Iraq since 2003.

This does not augur well for strategic success in the cityscapes of the future. Western militaries operate best when undertaking open area operations and conventional warfighting against clearly defined opponents, which contemporary trends suggest are the operations least likely to be encountered.[60] It is true that conventional urban warfare is always a possibility; yet, judging from today's trends, future operations are more likely to require long-term low-level policing actions against adversaries who cannot be identified by a uniform, formal organisation, or conventional code of conduct. It is just this type of operation for which Western militaries, governments and publics are least suited. It therefore makes sense for the West's adversaries to force it to fight in cities. For such reasons, cities—the archetype of urban terrain—will probably provide the politically significant areas of the future battlespace.

60 The differences between open and restricted terrain is primarily a matter of cover and range. There may be open areas on the edges of cities in which deep battle in the conventional sense may be fought.

This chapter argues that urban operations offer a lens through which to consider the complexity of future conflict in an urbanising world. It is organised in four sections. The reasons why urban operations deserve attention are outlined, and the factors typically shaping operations are noted. Second, the theme of continuity is introduced as a way of balancing today's faith in the transformational potential of sophisticated technologies. Third, some characteristics of future war are suggested on the basis that dramatic change is unlikely. Fourth, the chapter concludes that cities will probably provide the context for many future operations. That Western analysts have only limited insight into the ways in which emergent urban-based threats develop, or their dynamics, makes a reassessment of the strategic potential of urban operations timely.

Thinking about urban operations

There have been military operations in urban terrain for as long as cities have existed, yet military analysts only recently re-discovered them. The reasons why such operations rarely received special attention are unclear. It may be because it is more useful to classify operations as counterinsurgency or peacekeeping; it may be that the generic concepts and doctrine associated with the manoeuvrist approach are sufficient.[61] There have, after all, been few examples of sustained urban combat since 1945 and, although many of the conflicts occurring during the Cold War period included a strong

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61 The goal of the manoeuvrist approach to urban operations is to achieve objectives with fewer friendly casualties, less collateral damage, and reduced harm to the population. In UK doctrine, the manouevrist approach aims to defeat an enemy by destroying his cohesion and will through a series of rapid and unexpected actions; 'constant and unacceptable pressure' is to be applied against enemy vulnerabilities. The ability to do this depends primarily on 'an attitude of mind in which doing the unexpected and seeking originality is combined with a ruthless determination to succeed'; it does not preclude attrition. See Joint Warfare Publication (JWP) 0-01, *British Defence Doctrine*, 2001, pp. 3–5. The US approach is built on the interrelated activities of 'understand, shape, engage, consolidate, and transition', which are thought to enable troops to function more effectively in a chaotic and fluid urban environment.

urban element, NATO, for example, never paid special attention to defending the urbanised Rhine–Ruhr region. More recently, Operation *Iraqi Freedom* saw US forces successfully occupy Baghdad in a matter of days, leading some analysts to believe that it is no longer necessary for US forces to fight urban warfare on traditional terms.[62] This reinforces the belief that existing approaches to cities are sufficient.

Even so, most analysts and practitioners agree that urban operations are challenging, even if no more so than jungles or mountains—each requires special doctrine and training. The structural density, sewers, industrial hazards and high-rise buildings characteristic of most major cities represent multidimensional challenges. Electronic interference and interrupted lines of sight complicate communications and targeting for forces reliant upon technology, while concrete structures contribute to spalding, ricochets and fragment wounds. Whether conventional wisdom's assumption that urban conflict (which favours defence) magnifies the usual 3:1 ratio needed to overcome dug-in defence in open country with armour to more than 5:1 may be unproven, it is probable that the accessibility of most contemporary cities makes them easy to seize, yet hard to hold and control.[63] Moreover, cities are often the home of, or a sanctuary for, insurgents, terrorists and extremists, who only need to remain standing in order to claim some sort of victory. As a result, cities are notorious and are thought to be best avoided by conventional military forces.

The choice may not, however, be the West's to make. Indeed, a roll call of recent operations—Baghdad, Basra, Beirut, and Belfast, for example, and Dili, Freetown, Grozny, Jenin, Kabul, Mogadishu, Pristina, and Sarajevo—all suggest that it will be even more difficult in the future to avoid operations in cities than in the past. There is an increasing number of cities, they are larger, and their populations (at

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62 See Anthony Cordesman, *The 'Instant Lessons' of the Iraq War: Main Report*, 28 April 2003 working draft, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, p. 174, available at < http://www.csis.org/features/iraq >.

63 Compare P. O'Sullivan, *Terrain and Tactics*, Greenwood Press, London, 1991.

least in the South) tend to be younger, with all that this implies: many cities contain significant numbers of the alienated, unemployed, or uneducated young males most likely to follow charismatic ideologies or leaders. The reason is that one of the most notable global transformations of recent years has been the change from a predominantly rural world to an urban one.

The shift has been rapid and its military, political, societal and environmental implications are not yet fully understood. As a result, a number of conflicting trends are now evident. These include:

- Urban operations are thought increasingly probable, even as historical experience suggests that they are costly, vicious and best avoided.
- Security threats are judged to be more diverse, less predictable, and probably less challenging in terms of conventional warfare.
- Intervention is predominantly discretionary, but its context tends to be that of intractable civil conflict, international terrorism, or state repression.
- Western operations are subject to restrictive legal and moral rules at the same time as the military remit is expanded, small arms proliferate, novel forms of weaponry are developed, existential threats are identified and asymmetric warfare evolves.

The resultant mix of tactical, technical, political and strategic problems offers some insight into the challenges that urban warfare is likely to represent in the early decades of the twenty-first century. It suggests that, of all the environments in which conventional militaries operate, the urban environment will remain the most complex and difficult because cities influence the conduct of the operations taking place within them to a greater extent than any other type of terrain.

There are many reasons for this, of which four are fundamental: physical terrain, the presence of non-combatants, the nature of urban warfare, and the limitations of current military thought. Of the four, terrain and non-combatants are now part of Western orthodoxy.

Physical terrain

The physical characteristics and constraints of cities are special. Cities represent a complex multidimensional blend of horizontal, vertical, interior and external forms superimposed on natural relief. Ground manoeuvre becomes multidimensional in a way that cannot be compared to most open-area operations. Thus, although the widely feared nightmare scenario of sustained and wide-scale urban warfare in the tunnels and sewers of Baghdad in 2003 did not materialise, the key to Chechen resistance operations in the industrial city of Grozny in 1999 was a network of underground passages that survived heavy bombing and artillery attacks. As a result, Grozny was never sealed. The tactical problems presented by the inflammable and unsanitary shanty towns and slums of the developing world will be different again, but the key point in all such cases is that the urban environment consists not only of the terrain's physical features, but also its population and the infrastructure that links them all together.

Non-combatants

Cities are rarely empty, so securing a city means controlling its population, which is notoriously difficult. Control operations present tactical problems because non-combatants do not necessarily behave in rational ways and because urban conflict usually (but not always) challenges liberal values. Civilian casualties (and the incidence of brutality) are historically high. Further, short-term tactical advantage usually lies with the side having least regard for casualties: Iraqi suicide bombers were prepared to die in order to kill US troops maintaining checkpoints outside Najaf in 2003, and US Marines were

prepared to shoot innocent civilians in order to keep themselves safe at road blocks and during counterinsurgency operations in cities such Fallujah. Western militaries are disadvantaged in that they are more vulnerable to public criticism during control operations than are irregular forces or troops belonging to repressive regimes.

Control also refers to exploiting urban infrastructure, which adds another dimension to operations, for urban infrastructure has been redefined in the last 10 years. Previously, this term referred to the physical form of a city alone, whereas it now includes the telecommunications and information technologies that facilitate international communications and markets. Additionally, different kinds of infrastructural vulnerability may have strategic implications in politically or economically significant cities, especially during stabilisation or reconstruction operations. Central business districts, for example, depend on modern communications networks, whereas public health requires a different set of priorities. It is known that power-generation plants, water supply systems or police stations have an operational significance not found in other military operations, but much less is known about the potential operational advantages of keeping cities working. Significantly, some practitioners now argue that the exploitation of urban capabilities (in particular, of communications) should be a requirement where manoeuvre, rather than simply force protection, is needed.[64]

The nature of urban warfare

The nature of urban fighting further complicates the problem, regardless of whether the fighting is technically counterinsurgency or force-on-force for, although the technical challenges of urban operations are complex, they are only part of the equation.

64 This was the theme of the (unpublished) keynote presentation at an international seminar on urban operations held at the UK's Joint Services Command and Staff College in June 2002.

It is natural for Western politicians and commanders to argue that developments such as the multitasking capabilities that integrate sensors, information operations and human intelligence can contribute to successful operations in cities, but it is too easy to rely on technology and forget the enduring verities of warfighting (which are here held to apply to an Intifada scenario as much as to a situation like Iraq). Indeed, the West's recent experience in Iraq is misleading because it detracts from the fact that urban warfare is probably the single most difficult form of war and has probably changed less than most other forms. Urban warfare remains a brutal and exhausting matter, involving significant casualties and collateral damage (that is, to personnel or property not forming part of an authorised target), and is the closest the West comes to pre-industrial forms of conflict. The traditional core capability of aggressive close combat—the Hunter-Killer philosophy of 'What I find, I can kill'—remains essential for successful operations.[65] This is true for the West's adversaries too, regardless of whether they are state or non-state forces, insurgents or freedom fighters.

Limitations of current military thought

Lastly, urban operations emphasise the intellectual and operational limitations of current military thought, decision-making, and logistics, all of which are designed for (and work best in) open area operations. They are also understood in the light of the most recent operational experiences, which at the time of writing are those in Iraq. The US-led Coalition's experience in Iraq has had mixed results. Although some (primarily US) technological and doctrinal development programs were presumably reassessed in the light of 2004–2005's flawed counterinsurgency operations, the successful taking of Baghdad in 2003 meant that there is little pressure to re-examine the fundamentals of urban warfare.

65 Director of Infantry, *Future Infantry .... the route to 2020*, 2000, p. 16. Infantry capabilities remain the critical element in successful urban operations, even if most analysts consider a combined arms approach to be necessary.

Addressing the issues referred to here are therefore unlikely to be a priority. The United States used the precepts of manoeuvre warfare to draw the Republican Guard forward from static defences in Baghdad, engaging it outside the city. This meant that Baghdad could not be defended effectively. It offered opportunities for Coalition air and land forces to fight together in joint warfare under favourable conditions, thus supporting—and reinforcing—contemporary orthodoxy. United States forces then divided Baghdad by using key routes and the seizure of important buildings. Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) target acquisition assets helped overcome the Iraqi's superior knowledge of Baghdad, and armoured patrols (supported by helicopter and air support) lessened the need to fight house-to-house.[66]

The implications of this are serious, given that warfighting remains the primary purpose of most conventional militaries, even as military operations other than war become more usual.[67] As a result, existing doctrinal and organisational vulnerabilities remain even as plans and technologies are re-examined, internal resource battles are fought, and relevant lessons are listed. Success in Baghdad could even represent a vulnerability because the strategies and tactics used against Iraq may not transfer to other cities in other regions.

The controversy and special pleading surrounding the type of forces needed to deal with urban operations is indicative of such vulnerabilities. The debate surrounding the 'transformation' of US forces during operations in Iraq is especially significant, not least because US forces are in the vanguard of urban operations, and Washington's focus on developing lighter, more agile forces is common in Western capitals. In particular, the transformation debate emphasises that today's forces represent the legacy of previous

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66 See A. Cordesman, *The 'Instant Lessons' of the Iraq War*, p. 27.

67 For a discussion of these issues, see this author's 'Fear and loathing in Falluja', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2005.

decades, balanced by contemporary political concerns. Thus, the advocates for transformation in the United States argue in favour of lighter land forces equipped with better technology and new military doctrines, leading to innovative plans for greater reliance on special forces and precision-guided munitions.

This makes sense in cities, which are generally thought to require agile forces backed up by armour, close air support, and good intelligence. On the other hand, urban operations are notoriously manpower intensive. They also require specialised skills if excessive casualties are to be avoided in the early stages of an operation, yet few militaries have developed a cadre of specialists capable of operating effectively in cities without a preliminary period of training. Few units designed for general utility receive appropriate urban-enabling capabilities such as ISR, artillery, engineers and special forces. Permanently structured urban units with specialist equipment and training are rare, even though the development of appropriate combined-arms groupings representing elements of combat and combat support arms are widely thought essential.

Many tasks require re-assessment. Capabilities designed for open manoeuvre, such as specialist engineering and obstacle-crossing, will have to adapt in cities. Logistical support will need to deal with different relative consumption rates, medical units will treat different mixes of casualty types, and engineers working in sewers, utility tunnels and industrial premises will have to operate on foot and potentially in direct fire contact with the enemy. Combat support requirements for human intelligence (essential for establishing adequate levels of force protection) will be much higher than in equivalent rural areas. Operational level changes will be necessary too.

In summary, the urban environment is distinctive, and it is found worldwide. Its human features are imposed onto natural terrain, and its nature, shape, functions, dynamics, and survival are determined by it

being a human environment. For such reasons, cities have a magnifying effect on the complexity, rate, scale and range of military operations and roles. The implications of this have yet to be systematically assessed.

Change and continuity

Change

To achieve strategic success in such an environment, it is necessary to know more than the best method of clearing a stairwell; it requires an understanding of the strategic significance of cities as well as an awareness of the practicalities of operating in them. Above all, victory requires an understanding that technology is a necessary but not sufficient guarantor of strategic or operational success. Three trends suggest why it is necessary for the analysis of urban operations to go beyond purely technical or functional considerations.

First, much remains uncertain about the type of conflicts militaries should prepare for, whether it is easier to scale down than up, and what this might mean for force development. Indicators have been developed for identifying emergent threats, state fragmentation, and so forth, but the assessment of such factors remains an art rather than a science. Conventional war remains a possibility, but irregular, localised internal conflicts (that are not necessarily amenable to conventional warfighting techniques) seem a probability. Barring US intervention in Iran, a North Korean offensive on Seoul, or China on Taiwan, or some other major discontinuity, low-level shooting wars seem more likely than another Grozny or Baghdad. Yet there is nothing to suggest that even these will be any easier. Baghdad did not redefine urban warfare in any fundamental way.

Second, although new forms of political and military organisation are evident, Westphalian notions of the state continue to shape conventional doctrine—there has been no methodical analysis of what this might mean for urban operations.[68] Admittedly, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive: 'capital' cities such as Mogadishu and Kabul, for example, retain their significance even when the states they represent are no more than a name, and the military forces concerned comprise clan militia or 'Sobels' (men, such as those in Sierra Leone in the 1990s, who were soldiers by day and rebels by night).[69] Such changes may not require a clear shift in military tactics (command and control, for example, will remain the same), but they probably need to be factored into strategic and operational calculations.

Linked to this is a third trend—that cities remain significant political organisms. It is arguable that cities will be increasingly important in the coming decade. Not only do political elites live in them, but many are also links in the global production chain and targets for foreign investment: cities account for an increasing share of national income, generating 55 percent of gross national product, even in low-income countries. Many cities in the South are of political, financial, and international significance and contain production and storage facilities, seaports, airports, ground transportation hubs and financial centres. They are used by global and political capital as base points in the spatial organisation of production and markets. Mega-cities in some regions (such as the Pacific Rim) serve as primary contact points between the cities that direct and effectively control the international entrepreneurial system and regional or local markets on the global periphery. As a result, the current contests of globalisation, cultural

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68 'It is clear from Chinese and Russian military doctrines … that their military planners still contemplate national defense primarily in terms of traditional inter-state warfare': Ripsman, Norrin, and T.V. Paul, 'Globalization and the National Security State: A Framework for Analysis', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2005, p. 205.

69 For Sobels and the nature of non-state conflict more generally, see David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, James Currey, Oxford, 2005.

diversification, liberalisation and ecological change are directly reflected in cities, with all that this implies for their strategic value.

Sooner or later, Western militaries engage in intensive operations in cities and re-discover that very little is fundamentally new about urban warfare. This is most relevant at the tactical level, but the levels of war are tightly linked in cities, and tactical actions may have strategic consequences. It is true that many strategic constraints shaping contemporary operations are unprecedented, but they are, nonetheless, linked to long-standing problems. Thus, the terminology of asymmetric threats and minimal force may be recent, but the challenges of gaining intelligence in a densely populated city or distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants are the same today as they were for French paratroopers in Algiers in 1957. Finding the enemy is always complicated by the fact that communications in cities are problematic, and often results in frustration and the use of excessive force. Other long-standing problems include those associated with situational awareness, without which a commander has insufficient information to manoeuvre safely. This is always made difficult by the proximity of buildings. Even if appropriate technology is developed to resolve this, troops will remain vulnerable because streets channel movement.

Cities are also great equalisers. As a last resort, infantrymen will still be needed to engage the close fight with highly motivated adversaries who will probably be on familiar ground. Moreover, increasing ruthlessness and casualties invariably mark persistent operations at every level of conflict. The comments of Israeli reservists on Palestinian fighters in the refugee camp of Jenin on the West Bank in 2002 make this explicit: ‘those guys knew they were not going to get out alive and wanted to take as many Israelis as possible with them’.[70]

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70 P. Jacobson, ‘Jenin: Massacre or Madness?’, *Sunday Times Magazine*, 23 June 2002, pp. 36–43. This part of the IDF operation was, however, prompted by the deaths of 23 Israeli soldiers, including 13 killed by an elaborate ambush involving a suicide bomber, a booby-trapped house and gunfire.

Several days into the operation, one reservist noted that his orders were ‘to blast away at anything that moved, irrespective of whether troops were taking any return fire’. For such reasons is it probable that 2025 will probably see as much continuity as change.

Continuity

War will be fought differently in 2025, yet it remains probable that many of the strategic and operational lessons evident in Baghdad, Jenin and Grozny will be reaffirmed. Many of the tactics and much of the technology involved will also remain recognisable to the grandsons of today’s troops. The successful introduction of continuous surveillance, robots, lasers and nanotechnology into the Western repertoire at the tactical level will no doubt result in marked adaptation and experiment, yet it would be foolish to assume that current forms of artillery, mortars, rockets and armour will not continue to be troublesome: they are available worldwide and they work. Destruction (precision or otherwise) will remain characteristic of urban operations, even if it is sometimes modified by the need for international forces to balance military success, tolerable casualties and political norms.

Artillery will continue to play a major role in the future. It can provide direct-fire support within cities and can be used to isolate or prevent isolation outside them (though it is probably best used for evacuation, interdicting supplies, or the movement of reinforcements). Its use causes mobility problems for the attacker at the same time as it provides concealment for the defence, but it is very useful for reducing strong points. The use of artillery has a major psychological impact on defenders and can compensate for poor-quality infantry, untrained staffs and disjointed units. Russian forces often dealt with concealed or suspected snipers by collapsing the building from underneath them using self-propelled artillery, or by the 2S6 anti-aircraft weapon, which fires up to 5000 rounds per minute. High rates

of fire make automatic anti-aircraft guns an especially effective weapon in terms of shock and destructive effects (even if ammunition supply is usually a problem). It was as important in Baghdad in 2003 as in Grozny in 1995 or Beirut in 1982.

Mortars will remain the most used indirect-fire weapon for some years to come, for their high angle of fire allows rounds to reach street-level without being masked by surrounding structures. RPGs will no doubt retain their dominance as effective weapons against personnel, armour and structures.

In contrast, the use of conventional small-calibre artillery rockets to attack urban targets is likely to increase: the use of rockets by, for example, Palestinian groups, is now part of a broader trend in which improvised mortars are being replaced by rockets with longer ranges. Rockets are reliable, technically unsophisticated and easy to use; they are not especially accurate, but precision matters less in non-conventional war or terrorism. One result is that the use of rotary-wing aircraft is likely to remain limited, regardless of what the advocates of airpower claim. This is not to suggest that airpower cannot help isolate a military objective, obstruct the flow of a defender’s supplies and reinforcements into a city, and boost (or, in the case of the adversary, destroy) morale. Airpower is relatively ineffective in terms of bombardment, which is usually intended to reduce the defender’s will and physical ability to resist, but it rarely achieves either.

Armour will probably continue to play a significant role in the coming years, especially when special assault teams are used: it can breach concrete and steel structures and is especially useful when forming part of a combined-arms team. Indeed, it was a key technology in Iraq (and Jenin) because it provided protection and survivability against sniper and machine-gun fire. However, armour and tanks require strong dismounted infantry support if they are not to suffer horrific losses, as the initial assault on Grozny in 1994 showed, where

unaccompanied armour columns suffered loss rates of 70 per cent. More recently, Palestinians successfully used Command Detonated Mines to destroy two of the IDF's £3 million, 60-tonne Merkava Main Battle Tanks. Even Hezbollah guerrillas (generally better trained and equipped than Palestinian militants) had been unable to destroy a Merkava during 18 years of fighting against Israel.[71]

An additional perspective on the importance of continuity is suggested by analysts, such as the RAND's Sean Edwards, who argues that much of the technology employed today differs little from that employed before 1982, with weaponry used during the 1990s being much the same as in the 1970s (especially where rules of engagement prohibited the stronger side from fielding advanced tanks and artillery). This reflects that technological, social and political changes caused other elements to become more significant.[72] Other studies (including some conducted by the USMC) argue that certain important elements of urban operations now regarded as critical (intelligence, airpower, surprise, technology, combined arms and joint operations) are probably no more decisive today than in the past. In practice, an adaptive balance is usually evident. For example, advanced technology such as Joint Direct Attack munitions and sophisticated systems to disseminate intelligence about enemy movements were invaluable in the Iraq war, but so too was low technology. The USMC advancing into Baghdad carried shoulder-fired weapons with thermobaric explosive warheads, but they also carried breaching toolkits of wire cutters and ladders, Kevlar gloves and mirrors to look around corners.

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71 A. Geibel, 'Recent Merkava Attacks Highlight Growing Command Detonated Mine Threat', *Armor*, Vol. CXI, No. 3, 2002, pp. 46–47.

72 The argument is that of S. Edwards, *Mars Unmasked: The Changing Face of Military Operations*, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 2000. Compare USMC studies which conclude that the major factors impacting on the way urban warfare has been conducted include intelligence, surprise, special assault units supported by tanks, and the use of direct and indirect artillery. See 'Modern Urban Battle Analysis and Observations (Part 1): MAWTS-1 Aviation Combat Element MOUT Manual', available at < www.specialservice. com/mout/ battles3.htm >.

In reality, continuities persist to offset today's technologically-driven changes, and many recent operations in Iraq or the West Bank are strikingly reminiscent of those in the 1940s. The IDF assault on Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah in March 2002 is a case in point. A giant bulldozer broke into Arafat's compound, followed by an armoured personnel carrier that disgorged 30 soldiers. They scrambled into position, inching along with their backs to the breached wall. One by one they stepped through the rubble; moving into the building, they kicked down doors as they went, shooting inside rooms and hurling stun grenades. Noise levels were terrifying as tanks blasted buildings, throwing up clouds of white dust.[73]

Continuity is a dominant theme in the lessons-learned literature dealing with tactical details. Many of the lessons learned by the IDF during the Second Intifada, for example, are familiar to soldiers in any age. They include the need to time the insertion of special forces so that they are not overwhelmed by local militia, to improvise by taping flashlights to rifle hand-guards, and to employ translators familiar with the local slang used during cell phone conversations. Not only do doctrinal publications include past case studies, but also tactics used in earlier decades may be rediscovered—mouseholing was rediscovered in Jenin, as were the dangers of snipers, booby traps and sewers. Two years later, US troops in Fallujah were observed mouseholing. No doubt, their grandsons will be too.

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73 'Tanks open fire, then troops pour in', Daily Telegraph, 30 March 2002. Photographs showing UK and US troops moving into Basra in 2003, for example, achieve the same effect as do those showing troops manning roadblocks, patrolling Iraqi streets, or standing amid the aftermath of an August morning's car bomb in Shula district, Baghdad. For photographs of the entry into Basra and later British patrols in 2003, see < www.operations.mod.uk/telic >. For US troops mouseholing in Fallujah in November 2004, see < www.gallery.muzi.com/ pfg/english/1003536.shtml?pfm >. Compare the situation in Grozny shown by work of the photojournalist Eric Bouvet at < http://users.westnet.gr/~cgian/grozny.htm >. All websites were accessed in September 2005.

Significantly, the operational and strategic lessons learned by the IDF are familiar as well. Operationally, it has often been difficult for Israeli commanders to get well-defined policy objectives to which they could work steadily and logically. Moreover, contrary to initial government expectations, operations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been neither short nor economical. Strategically, the most important lesson is, once again, that military action rarely solves the political problems underlying security challenges. That Israel, with its well-trained troops and highly efficient intelligence forces, has been unable to crush or control Palestinian fighters shows how difficult it is for conventional forces to manage low-level urban-based threats.

Technological solutions to such problems are highly desirable and new technologies in areas such as ISR, precision munitions, and non-lethal weapons suggest exciting possibilities, not least because America's faith in technology's leverage potential is widely shared. The changes associated with President George W. Bush's pledge to give the Pentagon the opportunity to 'skip a generation' in military technology could yet affect the course of future urban warfighting. Or it could merely pander to the vision of war as the United States and its closest allies would like to fight it—'controllable, quick, clean, and with victory assured'.[74]

Future war

In 2003, Baghdad was secured with historically low levels of casualties and destruction. This may mean that the conventional precepts of urban warfare are no longer valid; that it is no longer necessary to fight urban warfare on traditional terms. Or it might mean that military success by US forces was assured by a combination of circumstances, including poor training or incompetence on the part of the Iraqis. Whatever the case, there is no evidence of a fundamental

74 C. McInnes, *Spectator-Sport War*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 2001, p. 136.

change in the nature of urban operations. Patrolling, to take one common task, remains an essential task in effective operations. National styles of patrolling differ and surveillance technology may yet allow troops to avoid this type of activity, but for now the basic functional requirements are the same as they were 40 years ago: non-combatants require controlling; efficient and effective operations need intelligence; and patrols are an effective way to achieve both. There is nothing new at the strategic level either. The strategies shaping current urban operations in Iraq are most charitably described as incoherent, while the Bush Administration's policies are best classified as hyper-realist. No doubt, incoherence and realist imperatives will continue to shape operations in 2025.

Technological advances are unlikely in the immediate future to shift dramatically the balance of urban operations into the West's favour; technical breakthroughs are rarely sufficient to create a different way of warfare. This is not to suggest that technological advantages should not be sought. Rather, it is to remind the advocates of futuristic visions that, with the exception of Russia, most major nation-states no longer have direct experience of sustained and large-scale close combat in cities, and it is difficult to know precisely how fashionable technology would work.

The synergy achieved by joint forces during Operation *Iraqi Freedom* was indeed impressive, but this is not necessarily indicative of future success. In particular, it is clear that, although US troops took Baghdad with considerable flair, they did not dominate the ensuing low-level urban battlespace to anything like the same degree. They were admittedly hampered by the political constraints imposed on their operations, but this is a fundamental variable that must be factored in to any evaluation. At best, troops had only a limited ability to see into the battlespace, and to communicate and move within it. Moreover, they did not 'own' the streets of Fallujah or Najaf; any domination was temporary and dependent on their physical presence.

If industry promises are fulfilled, then this situation will change and operations will be conducted very differently in the future, especially at the lower end of the spectrum. Yet a technology-driven revolution looks unlikely, especially in low-level operations. At present, there is no evidence that either transformation or full-spectrum dominance is anything other than aspirational. Too many questions remain unanswered, particularly on the ability of warfighting troops reliant on technology to manage ambiguous challenges, police crowds, identify non-combatants and, by extension, translate tactical success into strategic achievement.

Recent operations do not provide incontrovertible evidence that Western forces are any more efficient at sustained urban warfare than they were in 1945—they may be less effective, constrained as they now are by international law, cultural norms, the presence of the international media and the political imperatives shaping discretionary interventions. There is still no easy way to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants; the military significance of a warren of alleyways is as potentially critical as ever, and operations continue to be exhausting. Moreover, what works for legacy structures in 2003 may be unworkable in the digitalised structures expected by 2010.

The conclusion offered here, therefore, is that evolution is the dominant mode of change, though the balance or expression of even recognisable factors will be different in the future. New alliances and rivalries will emerge and objectives will be re-defined or re-prioritised; resources may become joint or commercialised in a way currently unimagined. Escalation cannot be dismissed, not least because the type of tactics an intelligent opponent develops in response to the West's current operations cannot be predicted. Nor can major discontinuities with the potential to change strategic circumstances be foreseen.

This represents an intellectual challenge for those charged with developing strategies and tactics for urban operations. In particular, the political requirements of contemporary operations have created a terminology whereby using words such as ‘precision’, ‘digitisation’ and ‘transformation’ implies a degree of control or management that does not exist. Current categorisation reinforces the false sense of security that operations will not escalate in an unpredictable or bizarre fashion. In fact, distinctions between the various phases of urban operations remain imprecise, simultaneous transitional operations are difficult to conceptualise, and there is no method or doctrine for precision urban combat.

Conclusion

The potential for fundamental or dramatic change in the coming decade exists, yet seems unlikely. It is probably misleading, not to say arrogant, to assume that the world has entered a new period of uncertainty or rapid change with more diverse threats. Evolutionary or adaptive processes, in which operations retain many of the characteristics of the early years of the century, are more probable, with the transitional phases displaying recognisable patterns and forms. An expansion of policing or internal security tasks is one such possibility, especially if large, youthful and motivated populations prove characteristic of future conflicts, or if terrorism remains a primary security concern.

In reality, it is impossible to guess what war will look like in 2025, but, based on today’s trends, it is clear that urbanisation will provide an interactive context for many future operations. This matters for a number of reasons. Not only are such operations notoriously challenging at the technical level, but they also present a unique set of political and moral challenges to commanders and politicians. Cities magnify and intensify all military challenges, but reductionist analyses that treat them as a purely technical concern are flawed, not least

because urban operations represent an archetype of war, and the deliberate destruction of the human-centric world makes them additionally powerful. For such reasons, urban operations offer a lens through which to consider the complexity of future conflict.