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From Conception to Policy:

Evolution of Thinking on the War against Terrorism 2002-2004

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

- Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88-89.

This paper provides a synthesis of information drawn from several efforts conducted by a Washington-based think tank in the 2002 to 2005 time frame. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be of interest to senior policy makers across the agencies of the United States Government and members of Congress. Recommendations are developed specifically for the interagency process statutorily housed in the National Security Council. The focus is on three different conceptions of the conflict and how they evolved in the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks. The material presented remains relevant to those who study national security policy and how it is formulated. It may hold some interest for historians. It has been productively employed in a graduate program in government and security at Johns Hopkins University to evoke discussion on national security policy formation.

Chapter I: From Conception to Policy

This paper provides a synthesis of information drawn from several efforts conducted by a Washington-based think tank in the 2002 to 2005 time frame. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be of interest to senior policy makers across the agencies of the United States Government (USG) and members of Congress. Recommendations are developed specifically for the interagency process statutorily housed in the National Security Council (NSC). The focus is on three different conceptions of the conflict and how they evolved in the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks.

Purpose and Background

Since September 2001, defense analysts have increasingly been involved in studies related to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Generally, these studies have had a particular focus, but all were centered within the GWOT. The primary purpose of this paper is to collect and synthesize the information gained since 2001 that has not been reported in previous studies. An additional purpose is to inform ongoing and future studies related to the GWOT.

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Scope and Limitations

The findings, conclusions, and recommendations reported here are directed toward the most senior executives in the USG, those who have policy making and policy implementation responsibilities with respect to the GWOT. The issues addressed are national-strategic in nature, they are not specific to any particular theater of operations, they do not address the operational or tactical level of conflict, and they are not specific to the Defense Department.

Approach

Members of the study team interviewed high-level decision makers across the USG, participated in a variety of war games, and participated in diverse working groups that inquired into various aspects of the GWOT. Interviews were conducted with national-level decision makers in the Washington, D.C. area and with theater-level decision makers in the combatant commands. Respondents were members of the senior executive service, senior intelligence service, general and flag officers, and political appointees. The names of the respondents, their literal comments, and their agency affiliations are not provided in this paper.

The most significant assertions made by respondents were subjected to testing in subsequent interviews and by examination of official policy statements and public law. The surviving findings have been either corroborated or verified, or they could not be refuted after due diligence.

The preponderance of findings and conclusions from these disparate activities are consistent across the reporting period. Conceptions of the conflict, however, have evolved somewhat.

The study group discerned clear and consistent patterns in the statements of the respondents, collected them under the rubric of findings, and treated them as symptoms. Symptoms that were most consistent across respondents were identified and collectively diagnosed. These diagnoses constitute the major conclusions of the study, and they drove the study's recommendations.

Analytic Framework

An analytic framework was an important byproduct of the early studies. The early and persistent conclusion of the study is that the U.S. response to the current conflict environment requires orchestration of all the instruments of power. The orchestration metaphor was extended by including the roles of composer (policy maker), inspiration (conception of the conflict), score (policy statement), orchestra (instruments of power), and conductor (real-time decision maker).

Borrowing from the idea of *orchestrating* the instruments of national power, a musical metaphor is used to guide the analysis below. The wrong instruments in the orchestra, the lack of a quality musical score, or the lack of a conductor to interpret the score, shift emphasis, and regulate timing produces cacophony rather than harmony.

Table 1. The Analytic Framework

Metaphor	Analytic Framework
Inspiration	Conception of the conflict—threat and response
Composer	Policy making body
Score	Principles and policies governing the conflict—identifies the necessary instruments of power and the agencies wielding those instruments, assigns roles and missions to the agencies, and assigns supported/supporting relationships between the agencies
Orchestra	Instruments of power in the proper balance to implement the policy as stated
Conductor	A real time decision maker to, within the defined principles and policies, shift emphasis and timing

The lack of a common sheet of music, or *score*, that establishes enduring principles and policies for all instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments (DIME)—is an often-cited symptom from those charged with prosecuting the war on terrorism. A second symptom cited is the lack of a single *conductor* with authority to shift on a daily basis the emphasis and timing of the instruments of power. Unity of effort can be achieved in more than one way: through unity of command or through greater collaboration or coordination. Both the ideas of score and conductor suggest unity of command; orchestras require both forms of centralized direction. Even an improvisational jazz band can begin with a common score, but the musicians interpret the score through real-time, face-to-face collaboration.

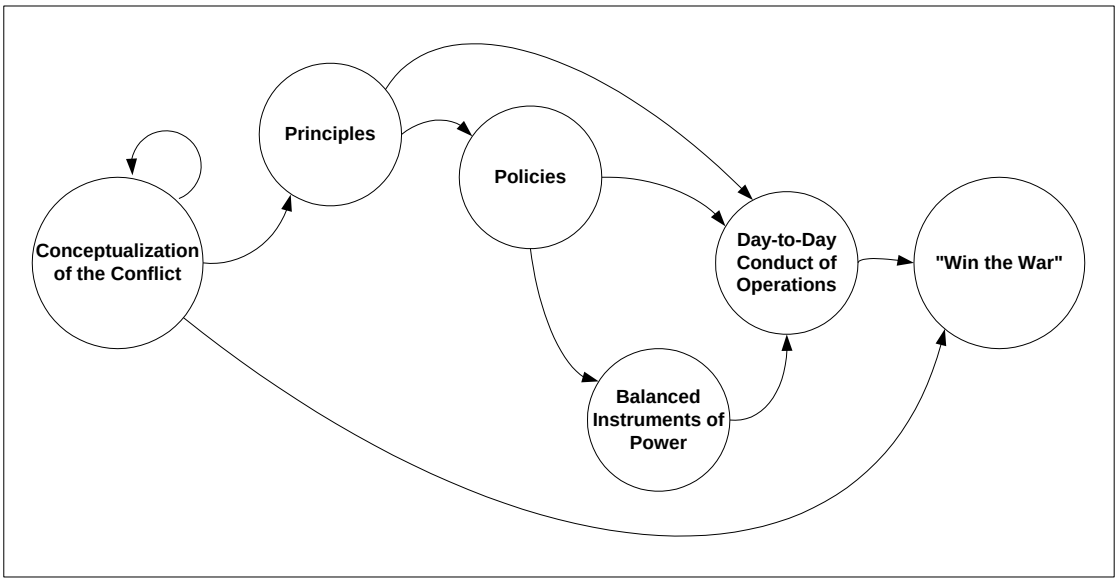

Figure 1. From Conception to Winning

As shown in **Figure 1**, the process begins with formation of a common, shared conception of the conflict. This chapter is structured in accordance with the process and begins with an examination of three conceptions of the conflict to show how each affects the nation's response through its different agencies. The conceptualization needs to be revisited as the conflict evolves. Second, enduring principles and long-term policies are derived from the conception. Policies drive roles and missions of the various agencies and determine adequacy of means—the instruments—in terms of numbers but more importantly in terms of balance. A single entity is needed to shift emphasis and timing on a day-to-day basis to "win the war." As will be shown in subsequent sections, the meaning of "winning the war" depends on which conception is chosen. And strategic ends necessarily follow from the meaning of winning.

Organization of this Paper

The remaining material in this paper is organized into three chapters. To some extent, the chapters represent a progression of thought beginning in 2002 and evolving through 2005. They might productively be read as an evolving series of articles.

Chapter II represents the earliest understanding reached by the study team in the 2002 to 2004 time frame. In addition to presenting findings, conclusions, and recommendations, the chapter also presents the analytic framework that is employed throughout the paper.

Chapter III uses the analytic framework to compare the policies of the anti-communist counterinsurgency era and the current counterterrorism era. Counterterrorism was chosen as the dominant conception at the time based on official policy declarations. Although this chapter is largely *descriptive* of the two eras, it includes conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter IV settles on two alternative conceptions—counterterrorist and counterinsurgency—and the requirements of a policy statement appropriate to each is proposed. Counterterrorism was rejected as a conception in this chapter as the study group moved away from *description* and toward *prescription*.

The material in this paper is augmented with a full list of references at the end.

Chapter II: From Concept to Policy to Instruments

For decades, the word containment summarized the national security strategy of the United States and its allies against the Soviet Union and its allies.[1] The decade that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union did not produce a new strategy with any degree of political consensus in the United States.[2] The events of 9/11 occurred during this period of instability in strategic thinking. The national security organizations, processes, and procedures formed during the decades-long Cold War, designed for great power conflict, remained largely intact.

Just as the Cold War began with an undifferentiated view of the threat of communism, the present era began with an undifferentiated view of terrorism. The two years following 9/11

1 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1982). Although the role of the word "containment" was a constant throughout the Cold War, Gaddis identifies several different versions of containment that were apparent.
2 Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (winter 1996/1997).

showed signs of seeking an appropriate conception of the conflict. The pre-9/11 conception was largely one of law enforcement with retaliation against the perpetrator following the collection of near-courtroom quality evidence. The law enforcement conception was soundly rejected post 9/11. An insurgency-counterinsurgency conception soon surfaced, but it too was rejected because it allegedly conferred a degree of legitimacy to the insurgents. The United States responded, instead, out of a major war conception by projecting combat power around the world to defeat the military forces of state enemies.

Prosecuting the "global war on terrorism" continues to suffer from the lack of a common, useful conception of the conflict. The consequence is that each institution responds from its own conception and existing capabilities[3] making disjoint the message the United States sends through word and action to its friends, allies, and enemies.

The proper balance of the instruments of power across the government generally, and the proper balance of military forces within the Defense Department specifically, can be determined only in reference to the conception of the conflict.

A strategy links ends, ways, and means. Agencies have substantial *means* at their disposal and have developed standard *ways* of applying those means, many shaped by the Cold War. There appears to be little consensus on clear *ends*, thus leaving the strategic equation insolvable.

The study team concluded that most lacking is a common conception of the conflict from which objectives can be assigned to, or inferred by, the agencies. Without a clear conception, orchestrating the instruments of power to achieve unity of effort is problematic.

Conceptualize the Conflict (the Composer)

The United States had several decades during the Cold War to create institutions and processes for transitioning to war between great power alliances and for managing international relations below the threshold of war. Each agency of government developed an understanding of its role and which institutional responses were appropriate. Over time, government agencies became somewhat self-directed, requiring only "management by exception" from the most senior decision makers.

While staying prepared to transition from peacetime to great power war, the country was called upon to engage failed or failing states that commonly were threatened by communist-inspired insurgencies. These insurgencies were considered "lesser-included cases" that could be handled by the response mechanisms designed for war between major powers. What were once lesser-included cases are now the main event.

The abrupt end to the era of great power conflict did not cause the U.S. Government's organizational design to change. The 11 September 2001 attacks, on the other hand, caused change, but what that change needed to be was unclear. With the exception of establishing the Department of Homeland Security, the organizational design across the agencies remained stable; each organization adapted but from its established conception, within its existing area of competence, and through its standard operating procedures. As experience was gained, each

3, Graham T. Allison, "Conceptual Models of the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1969): 689-718. Allison's article is perhaps the most cited when making the argument that in crisis organizations can only respond out of their pre-existing repertoire.

agency adapted to changing circumstances—but from its own perspective, not from a common framework. *Each agency was its own composer.*

In discussions immediately following 9/11, three conceptions were apparent. For purposes of this chapter, the prominent conceptions are referred to by one of the three following names:

- major war,
- law enforcement, or
- counterinsurgency warfare.

None of these conceptions is perfectly suited to the current conflict, although counterinsurgency appears to offer the best starting point for conceptualization.

Major war

Major wars are fought between major powers. For major wars, warfighting commands (like those in Korea or the European, Pacific, and Central regions) must have a strategic plan for defeat of the enemy military. Major war is preceded by the failure of other instruments of national power leaving only the isolated military instruments of the various states to settle their political or economic differences. The strategic plan is refined into some number of campaigns and major operations sequenced to achieve the objectives of the strategy. Campaigns are the *ways* in the ends-ways-means equation of military strategy. A set of superbly planned and executed tactical operations may not achieve any operational or strategic objectives and thus may have no lasting effect other than to squander resources.

Deliberate planning at the strategic and operational levels is a deeply engrained skill of the major war culture. Within the United States, the major war culture sees the solution as defense forward: the projection of combat power anywhere in the world to defeat another military force. The expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait, the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the regime change in Iraq are examples of this conception. The conflicts that followed are not.

The major war conception is very well suited to cases where the enemy military force is the center of gravity; when this is not the case *the major war conception is at best incomplete and at worst counterproductive*.

Law enforcement

A second conception—law enforcement—focuses on the criminal terrorist act at local, national, and international levels. In contrast to the major war view, law enforcement carries with it the idea that there will be no decisive battle that leads to armistice. Law enforcement organizations attempt to manage crime within acceptable bounds; law enforcement has no end and must be sustained permanently. In this conception, we might draw the analogy between U.S. military forces and police special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams. They organize, train, and equip to strike quickly and forcefully when and where national authorities so designate and then return to the ready.

Within the law enforcement conception, there is no strategy to bring an end to crime. There may be the ways of a strategy, for example, a change to a community policing policy that increases the efficiency of available means or that decreases objective measures of crime. Planning for the defeat of an "enemy" is not part of the law enforcement culture. The debate

surrounding the global war on terrorism in the 2002 to 2004 time frame vacillated between the language of major war and of law enforcement, including the dilemma of whether to treat Taliban soldiers as criminals or as prisoners of war with legal rights under international law, and including the pre-9/11 reluctance to strike targets without near courtroom-quality evidence.

War is a poor metaphor for law enforcement efforts against drugs, crime, and terrorism.

Counterinsurgency warfare

A third conception of the current conflict, countering insurgency or guerrilla war, carries with it the idea of a protracted conflict that eventually ends in victory or the reduction of violence to a level appropriate for a transition to law enforcement. Insurgencies are waged by people against governments and established order. The underlying conditions generally include a government failing to meet the basic needs of its people. Counterinsurgency requires the application of all instruments of power to achieve competing objectives. Force-on-force engagement is ancillary and generally runs counter to the main effort. Local governments must be seen to be in charge or their legitimacy will be further eroded, and they must be willing to undertake reforms to remedy the conditions that enable the insurgency. Insurgency-counterinsurgency is, above all else, a struggle for the loyalties of people and the right to govern.

Just as with the law enforcement model, the counterinsurgency conception would see U.S. military forces providing SWAT capabilities that organize, train, and equip to strike quickly and forcefully when and where national authorities so designate and then return to the ready. Effectiveness for counterinsurgency is measured in terms of progress towards the eventual defeat of the movement, not attrition of the enemy force through combat operations. The enemy force may be perpetually regenerative. Strategic and campaign planning are inherent in successful counterinsurgency warfare.

Defeating an insurgency movement demands a strategy, but the military is not qualified to develop an overarching strategy marshaling all instruments of national and international power any more than a police SWAT team is qualified to develop a strategy to defeat crime in the city. Who, then, should be responsible for the counterinsurgency strategy and the subordinate campaign planning?

Develop Principles and Policies (the Score)

Enduring principles and long-term policies would allow the many actors in the war on terrorism the opportunity to collaborate or, at minimum, coordinate their activities to achieve unity of effort. Such policies would assign roles and missions to the various actors to avoid unnecessary redundancy, prevent gaps in coverage, and identify the seams that most need collaborative or coordinating efforts. Properly assigned roles and missions would also allow the many actors to focus on activities uniquely assigned without running afoul of other actors performing similar or related activities.

Enduring *principles* for the conduct of war on terrorism might well be permanent if the conception is accurate. For example, the ability to retaliate and inflict disproportionate damage can serve to deter major powers, and the potential for punishment can deter some amount of criminal activity. But the principle of deterrence does not apply to a non-state actor with nothing proportionate to hold hostage nor does it apply to suicidal individuals. A disproportionate retaliatory response, in fact, is often what insurgents hope to induce to win converts to their side.

Sharing a common and appropriate conception is the necessary precondition to identifying enduring principles.

Policies should persist for a year or more and guide the use of the various instruments. The most obvious policy not in evidence is the assignment of roles and missions to specific agencies and, where necessary, assignment of supported/supporting relationships. As more is learned about the enemy, and as the conflict evolves, policies should be revisited. If, for example, a series of campaigns are planned and executed as phases, it may be appropriate for the diplomatic instrument to lead in one phase, the military instrument in another, and law enforcement in another. Campaigns and phases may span months, years, or decades; and policies must keep pace to the evolution.

But policies cannot anticipate all possible branches and sequels or their timing. Policy must establish a single decision-making body to respond in real time as eventualities unfold. *Policy making and policy implementation are separate functions best carried out by separate bodies*.

Conduct Day-to-Day Operations (the Conductor)

Immediately after 9/11, each of the agencies of government, and each Defense Department component, executed its assigned missions and functions based on pre-9/11 principles and policies. Then each organization separately interpreted and implemented the evolving guidance through its own cultural lens. The result has been friction in planning and execution.

Acting within the broad framework provided by policy makers, a single policy-implementing body must have the authority—and the mechanisms to exercise that authority—to shift emphasis and timing and to decide among immediate competing objectives without resort to a deliberative body or to deliberative processes. The sum of comments from the respondents suggests that a single conductor is lacking, and that *each instrument has, at best, its own conductor.*

Balance the Instruments (the Orchestra)

The right instruments in the right balance must be present for orchestration. No single instrument is sufficient in isolation. There is strong evidence that there is an imbalance within military force structure as typified by the existence of high-demand, low-density force elements. As important, an imbalance across the elements of national power is implied and is expressed by the dominance of the military instrument over other instruments.

Balance within the military instrument

The design of today's military force structure is a scaled-down version of a force designed for conflict between major powers. Insurgency has been treated as a lesser-included case that could be handled by a force designed for war between major powers. Steps have been taken to address the imbalance, but there remain certain military capabilities in small numbers that are in high demand. A force designed for counterinsurgency operations will likely be unsuited to war against a major power. Addressing the imbalance is perhaps the most important force development policy issue facing the Defense Department today. Moving more toward a force designed for major war or a force designed for counterinsurgency assumes more risk in the

other warfare domain. The cost of maintaining two separate forces appears beyond reasonable budgetary expectations.

Tensions exist between regional combatant commands and functional combatant commands. Specifically, the Strategic Command (STRATCOM) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) have been given new global missions with respect to the war on terrorism. These new missions include strikes against targets in areas assigned to regional commands. The regional combatant commands will strongly resist any military actions not of their own device being conducted within their areas of responsibility. Regardless of the new missions, the preponderance, if not all, military operations are conducted under the legal authority of a regional command.

With respect to the global war on terrorism, the Northern Command (NORTHCOM) has predominantly defensive and consequence management roles; STRATCOM and SOCOM have offensive roles. STRATCOM contributes through its global strike mission and is oriented on weapons of mass destruction. SOCOM contributes through direct action—raids and strikes against terrorists—and through strategic reconnaissance. Each command has ways and means to achieve assigned objectives. Thus, each is able to form its own strategy. *No single department has authority over all instruments of national power.*

The capacity for strategic and campaign planning should not be assumed. SOCOM trains the forces of other countries to conduct counterinsurgency operations but SOCOM itself does not have a history of conducting counterinsurgencies. STRATCOM and SOCOM conduct tactical actions to achieve effects at the strategic and operational levels of war. Neither of these organizations, however, has a core competency of formulating a strategic plan to achieve strategic objectives, nor does either have campaign planning in its culture. They plan and execute tactically to achieve strategic effects directly.

To conduct a strike against a WMD target, STRATCOM is adjusting away from a strong deliberate planning culture to a time-sensitive or crisis-action culture with help from SOCOM mobile training teams. Conventional forces are officially assigned to Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) or to one of the regional commands and will be allocated to STRATCOM for use at the last minute. STRATCOM must deal with the command-and-control issues of last-minute force allocation and force employment in a regional combatant command's area of responsibility.

Since its inception, SOCOM has provided special operations and low-intensity conflict forces to the regional combatant commands who then integrated them with conventional forces already assigned. Forces officially designated as special operations forces in the late 1980s and assigned to SOCOM were largely a group of branch specialties orphaned by their "major-war" parent services. The composition of forces assigned to SOCOM was not selected so as to constitute a coherent force to prosecute the global war on terrorism. To prosecute a strike mission against a terrorist target, SOCOM, like STRATCOM, may be required to integrate conventional forces assigned to another command at the last minute and employ them within a regional combatant command's area of responsibility.

NORTHCOM is creating a culture from scratch. The natural tendency of military commands and commanders is to take charge, and yet most NORTHCOM activities will be in support of civil authorities. While NORTHCOM is creating its own culture and ways, so too is its nascent federal civilian counterpart, the Department of Homeland Security.

Within the Defense Department, the closest to assignment of overall responsibility for strategic and operational planning for the global war on terrorism is in the Unified Command Plan (UCP).[4] In the UCP, SOCOM is designated as the lead combatant command (not lead defense agency and not lead USG agency) for "planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks in cooperation with other combatant commanders." But responsibility for finding and dealing with *terrorists* is not the same as responsibility for overall strategic- or operational-level planning for the global war on *terrorism*. SOCOM's conception, culture, and capability set are more oriented toward a manhunt.

Balance across the instruments

Not all agencies were interviewed, and most respondents were from the Department of Defense. But from those outside Defense there is a perception that the military instrument dominates the other instruments. Plausible explanations include the possibility that the military instrument leads through strength of personality, by conscious policy choice, or because the other instruments are too weak or too poorly equipped to lead. Regardless, the absence of a central authority above the agencies is apparent. The consequence is that each community is attempting to respond to the conflict with its own mechanisms, adapting as it is able, and even augmenting its pre-existing capabilities with additional resources.

The behaviors of the individual agencies and communities are predictably symptomatic of the absence of a useful, shared conception, which is a high-level policy choice beyond their control. If the conception of the conflict is of war between major powers, then the isolated military instrument, tasked to defeat the opposing state's military force, is the obvious policy choice to lead. If the conception of the conflict is of insurgency-counterinsurgency, then a diplomatic or intelligence lead is the more obvious policy choice. If law enforcement is the chosen conception, then the Justice Department might be the lead agency. Balancing and orchestrating the instruments of power all derive from the conception of the conflict, and *there is evidence that the necessary conception is lacking.*

Absent a shared conception and recognized division of labor, each community is attempting to conduct the war against terrorism from its own conception, through its own internal processes, adapting when it can, and by augmenting its existing capabilities. Each agency responded individually and attempted to orchestrate all the instruments of power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic). Already in possession of the country's military forces, the Defense Department responded by proposing military solutions, enhancing its own intelligence collection capacity, establishing a strategic influence capability, and undertaking post-combat reconstruction operations. The Central Intelligence Agency, already in possession of considerable intelligence capability, applied its own paramilitary force. The CIA also maintains a strong relationship with special operations forces just as did its World War II forerunner, the Office of Strategic Services. The State Department, with responsibility for diplomacy and the conduct of foreign relations, has an organic intelligence capability, has the economic instrument in the form of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and once had the informational instrument in the form of the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency. The ambassador directs the country team, on which the military is represented. *The military has achieved clear dominance over the diplomatic corps in the global war on terrorism.*

4 White House, Unified Command Plan, 1 March 2005.

Win the war

The ends of the strategy derive from the conception chosen. Measures associated with attrition of the enemy's military force follow from the major war conception. Indicators of popular rejection of the insurgent's message and actions derives from the counterinsurgency warfare conception. And measures of violence are the obvious choice that follows from a law enforcement conception.

Winning the war is defined in terms of achieving the desired objectives. From the conception, a common score of principles and policies can be constructed and disseminated. The score determines what instruments, and in what balance, are needed, and the conductor provides the real-time orchestration of the instruments to achieve the desired objectives.

Finale

Great Britain's eminent strategist and historian, Sir Michael Howard, said that the "global war on terrorism" is more like a hunt than a war. The implication is that intelligence and law enforcement organizations will carry the primary burden, supported when necessary by covert and overt military operations. Each action, however, should be calculated to decrease, not increase, the number of those willing to engage in hostilities against the United States. This conception is closer to a counterinsurgency orientation, and it requires orchestration of all instruments of power. It is closer still to a counterterrorist conception, a manhunt, aligned closely with SOCOM's conception of the conflict.

Our declaratory policy (what we say we will do) does not seem to suggest that we have a shared conception—major war, law enforcement, counterinsurgency, or otherwise—other than a "global war on terrorism." There is evidence in our employment policy (what we actually do) that we are acting out of a major war conception, projecting power around the world to defeat military forces in Afghanistan and Iraq under the authority of regional combatant commands. We see evidence that the Defense Department is developing the capabilities to conduct a set of tactical battles and engagements, specifically through SOCOM and STRATCOM.

The United States should resurrect counterinsurgency thinking, elevate it to a global scale, and establish an organization to develop a counterinsurgency strategy and coordinate all elements of national (and international) power. The responsible authority must be educated and trained for strategic and campaign planning. A coherent message—of actions as well as words—must be designed to influence friends, enemies, and neutrals, and that message must guide, from the top down, the various institutions with responsibilities in the conflict.

The Kennedy administration's response to communist-inspired insurgencies in the third world was the establishment of the Special Group for Counter-Insurgency within the National Security Council. The Special Group established the Overseas Internal Defense Policy, which assigned roles and missions across the agencies of government and assigned authorities to the various ambassadors. The policy called for interagency plans on a country-by-country basis, and the Special Group would resource plans according to national priorities.

The United States failed to implement the Overseas Internal Defense Policy successfully in Vietnam. Prior to 1965, the military advisory period in Vietnam, the United States employed counterinsurgency thinking through its intelligence service, special operations forces, and developmental agencies. Counterinsurgency thinking was applied by the Marine Corps in

Vietnam from its introduction in 1965 until 1967.[5] More than one analyst unfavorably contrasts the major-war and counterinsurgency-warfare conceptions apparent in Vietnam.[6] There was no unified authority to orchestrate all instruments of national power in Vietnam until Ambassador Robert Komer arrived in 1967 to head the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program, but by then the isolated military instrument and major-war conception was firmly entrenched, and cords was subordinated to military command.

American anti-communist interventions in Latin American and Southeast Asia brought counterinsurgency thinking into ill repute with policy makers and implementers; the capability has atrophied, and is no longer a meaningful part of the country's national security culture. Campaign planning, specifically in support of a counterinsurgency strategy, is the central weakness in the national repertoire and requires education, training, and implementation at the highest levels.

The Special Operations Command cannot assume responsibility for orchestrating all instruments of national power, nor can the Department of Defense. Rather than the Special Group for Counterinsurgency, today's NSC Committee on Transnational Threats and the Board for Low Intensity Conflict have the statutory purview and authorities to provide policies and oversee their implementation. The Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism, recently established by executive rather than legislative authority, could also claim lead. None have acted as composer or conductor. There is no equivalent to the Overseas Internal Defense Policy. Overall policy and direction remain lacking.

Chapter III: On Not Starting from a Blank Slate

Through decades of great power conflict, sporadic terrorist attacks were treated as criminal acts with the perpetrators brought to justice; in rare cases, the response was a punitive military strike. There was no perceived need for an overarching policy to give consistency and to guide government action. The coordinated terrorist attacks of September 2001 changed America's perspective; after-the-fact prosecution and retaliation would be inadequate. But creating critical national security policy from whole cloth is a daunting task, and it is worth the effort to look to past eras for clues.

Of the three apparent interpretations of the current conflict environment (major war, law enforcement, and counterinsurgency) *counterinsurgency* is chosen as the most promising starting point. Correspondingly, the policy developed to counter the communist-inspired insurgencies of the 1960s is chosen as a basis of reference. Declarations since 2001, in contrast, are best characterized as *counterterrorism*. The policies of the two eras are individually described and then compared through according to the analytic framework developed in the previous chapter.

The Counterinsurgency Era

For many, the word containment is synonymous with Cold War strategy. But there exist at least seven containment strategies.[7] Eisenhower inherited a nuclear monopoly and his

5 Michael A. Hennessy, *Strategy and Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps*, 1965-1972 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).
6 Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
7 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1982).

secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, made public statements that were interpreted to be the threat of massive retaliation against the Soviet Union for major encroachments. Eisenhower employed carriers and marines below that threshold. The Kennedy campaign asserted that Ike had created the conditions for the United States to either go nuclear or acquiesce.

The Kennedy administration's version of containment was called flexible response. At the high end of the conflict spectrum, having lost the nuclear monopoly, mutual assured destruction replaced massive retaliation. Conventional air and land forces that had suffered under Eisenhower's New Look were bolstered for mid-intensity conflict. Failed and failing states in the underdeveloped world would provide ample opportunity for communist-inspired insurgencies which, in turn, would provide the inspiration for a counterinsurgency strategy and the creation of specialized forces for low-intensity conflict.[8]

The National Security Council Special Group for Counterinsurgency (SG-CI) was established by presidential directive in January 1962.[9] As a matter of national policy, subversive insurgency was placed on a par with conventional warfare. The SG-CI initially was chaired by the military representative of the president and its membership included the attorney general, deputy undersecretary of state for political affairs, deputy secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, director of central intelligence, special assistant to the president for national security affairs, and the administrator of the Agency for International Development. The director of the United States Information Agency was added in August 1962.[10] In November 1962, chairmanship was shifted from the president's military representative to the State Department representative.[11]

A State Department-chaired SG-CI produced the overarching policy statement for this era and lower end of the conflict spectrum—the Overseas Internal Defense Policy (OIDP).[12] Through the SG-CI, and in accordance with the OIDP, the president assigned planning responsibilities to specific ambassadors and country teams, decided when a regional approach rather than country approach was necessary, and oversaw the implementation of the entire effort. The SG-CI had authority to assign responsibility to selected ambassadors to develop plans for internal defense, it had review authority over those plans, and it had the authority to assign national resources to the individual plans. The Special Group was responsible for resolving interdepartmental problems.

In summary, SG-CI had responsibility to make policy, to resource plans, and to oversee policy implementation. The country teams, led by an ambassador, made the respective plans and oversaw plan implementation.

The environment that enabled and fostered insurgencies included two elements. The first was "the stresses and strains of the developmental process brought about by the revolutionary

8 NSAM 2, "Development of Counter-guerrilla Forces," February 3, 1961.
9 NSAM 124, "Establishment of the Special Group (Counter-Insurgency)," January 18, 1962.
10 NSAM 180, "Membership of the Special Group (Counterinsurgency)," August 13, 1962.
11 NSAM 204, "Special Group (Counter-Insurgency)," November 7, 1962. Agency participation was assigned to the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Agency for International Development, Central Intelligence Agency, United States Information Agency, and the White House. Individual membership was not modified.
12 United States Overseas Internal Defense Policy, September 1962. "This Document was prepared by an Interdepartmental Committee consisting of Representatives of State (Chair), DOD, JCS, USIA, CIA and AID and approved as policy by National Security Action Memorandum 182 of 24 August 1962."

break with the traditional past and uneven progress toward new and more modern forms of political, social, and economic organization." The second was the global contest between communism and democracy.

The OIDP describes insurgencies (communist inspired or not) by three levels (phases) of intensity. The first phase ranges from the threat of subversive activity to frequent and organized subversive activities; the second phase includes organized guerrilla warfare against the established authority; and the third phase begins when the insurgency becomes a war of movement between organized forces.

The OIDP then describes Soviet and Chinese doctrine for seizing power from within by a progression of three stages. The first stage involves political action; the second stage begins with the initiation of armed, tactical action; and the third stage is a war of movement between organized forces. Soviet and Chinese doctrine differed in some respects. In Soviet doctrine, power may be seized by prolonging the first and second stages, but for the Chinese all three stages are inevitable. For the Soviets, priority is given to building political support in urban centers, but the Chinese give priority to rural populations. Temporary retrenchment from a higher level to a lower level might be necessary.

The OIDP assigned roles and missions to the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The OIDP assigned the strongest role to the State Department. State had responsibility for intelligence collection on political, economic, and social-cultural developments (and to coordinate with other intelligence agencies). It had responsibility to garner the support of our allies for counterinsurgency efforts. State had the primary training responsibility for internal defense and modernizing societies, and it developed a pre-posting training program.[13]

On 4 September 1961 Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act reorganizing all foreign assistance programs previously rooted the post-World War II Marshall Plan. The Act required separate administration of military and non-military aid. President Kennedy established USAID to administer non-military foreign aid on 3 November 1961. The State Department had the authority to determine which states needed which programs. State, not Defense, determined which states required military assistance programs. Defense administered military aid programs. Thus, there is a tension between the two agencies over the economic instrument as applied to development abroad.[14]

The OIDP assigned the responsibility to administer economic aid programs to USAID. The role of USAID was to address the social and economic conditions that enabled an insurgency to flourish.

With respect to counterinsurgency, the OIDP assigned to the Defense Department the principal role of assisting in the development of a host nation's security apparatus against

13 Signed by Lyndon Johnson on 13 February 1964, NSAM 283 established elaborate training policy and objectives for overseas internal defense. It superseded NSAM 131 and NSAM 162.

14 In 1999, USIA was absorbed into the fabric of the State Department. USAID receives foreign policy guidance from the secretary of state. The diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments are effectively in the hands of the secretary of state, the senior cabinet member.

internal and external threats. If the situation warranted, DOD's role may become operational. DOD was responsible for providing forces capable of counterinsurgency warfare.

The OIDP assigned USIA the primary responsibility of countering communist propaganda efforts. It also assigned USIA the responsibility to influence the target audience to identify with its own government and to ease the transition to modernity.

The CIA role was left largely unspecified. It clearly, however, was responsible for providing intelligence support to both national-level decision makers and to the relevant country teams. Its relationship to military and paramilitary operations is left unspecified in the unclassified version of the policy statement.

The individual country teams drew members from the same sources as the SG-CI. The country teams developed and implemented plans. While the SG-CI was explicitly responsible for timely resolution of interdepartmental issues, day-to-day operations were the responsibility of the ambassadors and their country teams. In general, the OIDP describes a country-by-country process for countering insurgencies, but allows for regional approaches taken by an interdepartmental task force chaired by an assistant secretary of state.

Communist-directed insurgencies were the inspiration. The SG-CI and country teams acted as composers. The SG-CI produced the overarching policy, the OIDP, and each of the tasked country teams composed plans to implement the overarching policy. The orchestra contained the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power wielded respectively by the Department of State, U.S. Information Agency, Department of Defense, and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and with State in the lead.[15] Ambassadors and their country teams were responsible for conducting day-to-day operations.

The Counterterrorism Era

The national security strategy of President William J. Clinton moved beyond classic collective security toward cooperative security. The primary threat to national security, according to the thinking of cooperative security, is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the United States was willing to use force to prevent it. The preferred instrument in practice, however, was diplomatic—treaties and arms control agreements.[16]

The George W. Bush administration campaigned on something more akin to selective engagement[17] but resorted quickly to a strategy of hegemonic primacy. Under the thinking of selective engagement, the greatest threat to national security is conflict between major powers, and the United States should be selective in the use of force to conserve it to protect vital national interests. Under the thinking of hegemonic primacy, force should be used not only to protect vital interests, but to spread American values, to advance economic interests, and prevent the rise of a peer competitor, among other things.

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15 Lyndon Johnson's NSAM 341, dated 2 March 1966, disestablished the Special Group (Counterinsurgency) and established the more encompassing Senior Interdepartmental Group, which assumed the SG-CI's duties.
16 Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999) and Ashton B. Carter, William J. Perry, and John D. Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992) well represent cooperative security.
17 Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000): 45-62.

A national director for combating terrorism (a deputy national security advisor) was established by presidential directive in accordance with a 9/11 Commission recommendation. The directive established the national director as the principal advisor to the president,[18] but the directive was contested by the secretary of defense.[19] The new position lacked statutory authority. General Wayne Downing was appointed to fill the post but soon departed.

Some respondents asserted that the assistant to the president for national security affairs was the conductor of the global war on terrorism, but a search of official documents and statements produced no evidence to support the assertion. The president did, however, publicly declare the national security advisor to be in charge of the war in Iraq. The secretary of defense later assigned responsibility for the global war on terrorism to the commander of the special operations command, but neither the secretary's nor combatant commander's authorities extend to other agencies.[20]

In the current administration, the NSC does not make, oversee, or implement policy. Instead, the major agencies are expected to coordinate amongst themselves and to bring disagreements forward to the NSC for resolution when necessary.[21]

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (NSCT)[22] is the closest approximation to a national policy for the global war on terrorism. No national security presidential directive could be found that promulgates the document to the various agencies as official policy.

The primary inspiration reflected in the NSCT is the use of force by non-state actors. The strategy refers to objectives including changing perceptions that terrorism is not a legitimate form of political action and creating an "international environment inhospitable to terrorism" that would view acts of terrorism like "slavery, piracy, genocide."[23] The state is the only legitimate user of force.

Companion documents to the National Security Strategy, e.g., the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the National Strategy for Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets, define the threat differently.

The NSCT identifies three concurrent levels of action to counter terrorism. At the highest level is tacitly unilateral action to attack the global terrorist structure to reduce the global problem into a set of more manageable regional problems. Regional problems are dealt with through multilateral actions to isolate terrorist activities to individual states. The United States then works through bilateral relations with problem states.[24]

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18 NSPD 8, National Director and Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism.
19 Scarborough, Rowan, *Rumsfeld's War: The Untold Story of America's Anti-Terrorist Commander* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004). Scarborough's book places some relevant official memos, many classified, in the public domain. In one such memo (page 193) Secretary Rumsfeld takes issue with the NSC directive establishing the Deputy National Security Advisor for Combating Terrorism as the principal advisor to the president on combating global terrorism, including military operations. In another memo (page 188-189), Rumsfeld tasks the Special Operations Command to develop a plan to capture or kill terrorists, specifically disclaiming arrest in accordance with a law enforcement exercise.
20 This assignment was codified in the Unified Command Plan (UCP) 2004, signed by the president.
21 NSPD 2.
22White House, National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism, February 2003.
23 NSCT 1, 6, 11, 23-24.
24 NSCT 11.

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* identifies the instruments of national power as diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military.[25] There is no explicit mapping of government agencies to the individual instruments of power. The NSCT recognizes that intervention actions will be undertaken by diverse government authorities, either independently or in a coordinated fashion, but puts no one in charge.[26] There is no assignment of lead agency for combating terrorism

The NSCT recognizes the interrelatedness of terrorism and other transnational threats. It specifically identifies the Colombian FARC and the cocaine trade, al Qaeda and the poppy trade from Afghanistan, and Abu Suyyaf and kidnapping in the Philippines. It does not specify how government activities will be coordinated through policy or process across these domains. Within some subdomains, however, some leadership and supporting roles are assigned.

The State Department is assigned the lead in developing regional strategies, and the military combatant commands are assigned a supporting role in regional efforts through their Theater Engagement Strategies.[27] State is assigned lead in identifying and prioritizing overseas infrastructure linked to U.S. critical infrastructure.[28]

The Intelligence Community (the Director of Central Intelligence by inference) supported by Defense and State shall conduct annual reviews and assessments of terrorist sanctuaries and develop plans to counter them.[29]

All departments are tasked to promote counterterrorism in their bilateral and multilateral negotiations.[30] Specifically, the chief of mission shall support and report on a state's counterterrorist efforts, and shall emphasize counterterrorist objectives in bilateral and multilateral agreements.[31] State, Defense, and others, will ensure adequate staffing for Foreign Emergency Support Teams.[32]

The Department of Justice, with the support of State, will expand law enforcement activities overseas.[33]

An examination of the relevant documents—including national security strategy, its companion strategies, and national security presidential directives—leads one to conclude that leadership is nominally assigned to the deputy national security advisor for counterterrorism. The evidence, however, is that Defense is in the lead.

Terrorist acts committed by non-state actors are the inspiration. The White House and the individual agencies of government act as composers, with each agency composing its own policies in the absence of national policy directives. The NSC's national director for combating terrorism produced the overarching strategy, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. The orchestra contained the diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information,

25 NSCT 1, 15.
26 NSCT 27.
27 NSCT 17, 23.
28 NSCT 26.
29 NSCT 22.
30 NSCT 19.
31 NSCT 23.
32 NSCT 28.
33 NSCT 27.

intelligence, and military instruments of national power with tacit or ambiguous assignments to the various agencies. A conductor appears to be lacking.

Comparison

While both eras have a high-level policy statement, stark differences exist. The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* is a public document, an element of overt declaratory policy. Its audience is both domestic and international. It is intended to influence friends and enemies alike. Such statements, by design, contain "constructive ambiguity," intentionally exclude some material, and intentionally over emphasize other material. The *Overseas Internal Defense Policy*, in contrast, was a classified document not meant for public consumption. Its intended audience was the implementing U.S. Government agencies. The OIDP is an example of clearly written policy, including all that was considered important, excluding the less important, and avoiding ambiguity whenever possible. There is no similar policy statement for the current era.

Table 2. Comparison of Eras

Framework	Counter-Insurgency Era	Counter-Terrorism Era
Composer (policy, plans, and oversight)	Special Group for Counterinsurgency and Country Teams	Deputy National Security Advisor for Counterterrorism
Score (policy and plans)	Overseas Internal Defense Policy and Plans prepared by Country Teams	National Strategy for Combating Terrorism
Orchestra (instruments of power)	Diplomatic (State), Informational (USIA), Military (Defense), Economic (USAID)	Diplomatic, Economic, Law Enforcement, Financial, Information, Intelligence, Military
Conductor (day-to-day implementation)	Ambassadors	

One of the more obvious differences in the government response in the two eras is the dominance of State during the era of counterinsurgency versus the dominance of Defense in the era of counterterrorism. Dominance may be a matter of conscious choice, of personalities, or default.

Strengthening the Diplomatic Arm

An important transformation took place during the Cold War with respect to the orchestration of national power. Prior to the Second World War, the president could exercise his constitutional duty to conduct foreign policy through the State Department. When necessary, below the threshold of declared war, the State Department could exercise coercive diplomacy through the Department of Navy—gunboat diplomacy and landing of marines. The Department of War stood ready to mobilize a massive army should Congress declare war.

In 1947, the Departments of War and Navy were unified as the National Military Establishment, which was renamed the Department of Defense two years later. The merger was deemed necessary by the evidence offered by the clash of great power alliances in WWII. The intent of legislative reform since has been to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the military instrument.

The commanders of the regional combatant commands take their responsibility for shaping the strategic environment seriously. Their authorities and budgets continue to rise. Given their expansive regional responsibilities, they are seen by many as senior to an ambassador who has responsibilities for only a single country. In many ways they have usurped the State Department's leadership in foreign affairs.[34]

The unintended consequence of decades of defense legislation has been a strengthened military instrument isolated from the diplomatic instrument. That division may have been appropriate given the great power struggles of WWII and the Cold War, but small wars require the orchestration of all instruments of national power—diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. The State Department, however, has atrophied at the same time that the military has been strengthened. The Department of State no longer has the capacity to lead. Only Defense has the capacity. The consequences are a militaristic American foreign policy. *The present is not a period of great power conflict and State must be strengthened to assume its statutory lead role in foreign affairs.*

Strengthening the NSC

The respondents to the survey commonly pointed to the absence of clear national policy and executive lead. Equally frequently, they looked to the NSC as their expected source of policy for GWOT. In fact, the Council was established in law to assist the president in orchestrating the instruments of power related to national security.[35]

The function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.

The NSC proper is actually quite small.[36] Its statutory members are the president, vice president, secretary of state, and secretary of defense.[37] The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and Director, Central Intelligence (DCI) are statutory advisors.[38] The Council convenes

34 Dana Priest, "A Four-Star Foreign Policy?; U.S. Commanders Wield Rising Clout," *Washington Post*, 28 September 2000, final edition, A.01. Dana Priest, "An Engagement in 10 Time Zones' Zinni Crosses Central Asia, Holding Hands, Building Trust," *Washington Post*, 29 September 2000, final edition, A.01. Dana Priest, "Standing Up to State and Congress," *Washington Post*, 30 September 2000, final edition, A.01.

35 USC, Title 50, Section 402. Public Law 80-253, approved 26 July 1947 established the National Security Council replacing the informal management techniques and the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) of the wartime presidencies of Roosevelt and Truman.

36 The Council was originally composed of the president; the secretaries of state, defense, army, navy, and air force; and the chairman of the Joint Resources Board. In 1949 the service secretaries lost their membership and the vice president was added. The service chiefs continued only as advisors.

37 The secretary of energy was added in 2007.

38 The director of national intelligence (DNI) replaced the DCI in 2004.

at the pleasure of the president. The NSC staff, however, is a permanent body of between twenty and fifty professionals; some are augmentees from the various agencies of government.

The special assistant to the president for national security affairs—since the Nixon administration referred to as the national security advisor (NSA)—has statutory authority as the director of the NSC staff but no statutory role in policy formulation or implementation. The more prominent duty has been, on occasion, as the president's principal advisor on national security affairs. On those occasions, a tension existed between the NSA, secretary of state, and secretary of defense.

Throughout the history of the NSC, documents have been produced for three purposes.[39] Many direct the NSC to conduct studies. Others promulgate official policy; the policy is often the output of a previous study. A third purpose is to direct action.[40] All three purposes are satisfied by either one or two types of formal NSC documents whose names vary by administration.[41]

The design and role of the NSC is driven by the needs and style of the individual president. More thorough histories of the NSC are available and worth reviewing,[42] but for our purposes here a quick review of the Eisenhower and Kennedy systems will serve. Subsequent nscs are variations on those themes. The various Councils have had responsibilities in policy formulation, overseeing policy implementation, or directing actions.

Eisenhower's large staff did all three but the functions were clearly separated between policy formulation and implementation oversight. Formulation was the responsibility of the Planning Board, and implementation oversight was the domain of the Operations Coordinating Board. Fast breaking crises were managed outside the NSC by the president and principals. Day-to-day implementation of foreign policy was managed by State, and day-to-day implementation of military policy was managed by Defense.

Kennedy dismantled the staff structure and relied instead on ad hoc policymaking groups, thus minimizing the organization between the president and State. JFK did not want the NSC

39 GAO/NSAID-89-31, National Security: The Use of Presidential Directives to Make and Implement U.S. Policy, December 1988.

40 For example, covert intelligence operations in support of foreign policy objectives were authorized under Truman's NSC. NSC 1/1, NSC 4, NSC 10/2 in 1947 and 1948.

41 The directives that initiated studies or reviews, and those that promulgated decisions are shown in the table below.

Administration	Study Directive	Decision Directive
Kennedy-Johnson	national security action memorandum (NSAM)	
Nixon-Ford	national security study memorandum (NSSM)	national security decision memorandum (NSDM)
Carter	presidential directive (PD)	presidential review memorandum (PRM)
Reagan	national security study directive (NSSD)	national security decision directive (NSDD)
Bush	national security review (NSR)	national security decision (NSD)
Clinton	presidential review directive (PRD)	presidential decision directive (PDD)
Bush	national security presidential directive (NSPD)	

42 Zbignew Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis, *Foreign Affairs* (winter 1987-1988): 80-99. Office of the Historian, Department of State, http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html, accessed 22 May 2005.

monitoring policy implementation, and Eisenhower's Operations Coordination Board was abolished. Coordination of policy defaulted to State. But the failure at the Bay of Pigs brought back monitoring of policy implementation, created the White House situation room, and the NSC became "a little State Department."

Congress has been wont to legislate NSC internals leaving detailed design to the individual administration. However, prior to 9/11, and prior to the current administration taking office, there have existed at least two statutory NSC bodies relevant to the current conflict. One is the Board for Low Intensity Conflict, as established in law.[43]

The President shall establish within the National Security Council a board to be known as the "Board for Low Intensity Conflict." The principal function of the board shall be to coordinate the policies of the United States for low intensity conflict.

The Board was one of five innovations legislated in 1986 that included the establishment of a unified combatant command for special operations, an assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict, and a separate major force program (MFP-11). The Board has clear statutory authorities, and appears to have utility in GWOT. Specifically it has authorities to establish policies that guide operations such as those ongoing in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. The Board does not exist.

The second is the Committee on Transnational Threats.[44] Its statutory members are the DCI, secretaries of state and defense, the attorney general, and the assistant to the president for national security affairs, who serves as chair. A transnational threat is defined as follows.

Any transnational activity (including international terrorism, narcotics trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the delivery systems for such weapons, and organized crime) that threatens the national security of the United States.

The Committee is tasked to coordinate and direct government activities relating to combating transnational threats. The committee is responsible for identifying transnational threats, developing counter strategies, monitoring implementation of strategies, coordinating across departments, and developing information sharing policies and procedures across departments. The committee's purview includes coordination of intelligence and law enforcement activities as they relate to transnational threats. Even given its statutory authority, it appears not to have been used in the global war on terrorism.[45]

Chapter IV: Toward Meaningful Policy and Process

The necessary national policy statement must identify the threat and identify its root causes. These choices are for high-level political decision makers and are well beyond the authorities of the study group. It is possible, however, to identify the major competitors and flesh them out to the degree necessary to support decision-making.

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43 USC, Title 50, 402, (g) Board for Low Intensity Conflict. PL 99-661, Section 1311, commonly referred to the Cohen-Nunn amendment, became law on 14 November 1986. The direction to establish the Board for Low Intensity Conflict was accompanied by a sense of Congress that the president appoint a deputy assistant for national security affairs to direct the efforts of the Board.

44 USC, Title 50, 402, (i) Committee on Transnational Threats.

45 An NSC staff member stated that the Committee for Transnational Threats was renamed the Counterterrorism Committee on 12 September 2001. Personal correspondence 26 October 2005.

As trivial as it may sound, the conflict requires a name.[46] One choice is between naming the present conflict era as the Islamist-inspired or Salafist-inspired insurgency era. Focusing on Islamic fundamentalism allows inclusion of the 1979 revolution in Iran when a West-leaning monarchy was replaced with an Islamic Republic. Focusing on the insurgency aspects of the conflict, according to some, confers some degree of legitimacy to terrorists. Referring to the insurgency's Islamist roots risks interpretation of the conflict as a war between religious ideologies just as the communist-inspired insurgencies were part of a war between secular ideologies. On the positive side, the word insurgency focuses on those who are willing to use force against established governments, and it builds on the rich literature of insurgency and counterinsurgency strategies.

The two major interpretations of the threat in the present era are as (1) a global Salafist-inspired insurgency with potentially widespread support, or as (2) a small number of Salafist-inspired individuals with the ability and intent to do harm to the United States. The latter could be part of the former or decision makers could choose between them. The underlying root causes of each may be the same, but the resource implications for the strategies to counter the two threats are dramatically different.

Two national security policy statements are summarized below, one for each of the two threat interpretations. But first, the assumptions underlying each threat interpretation are made explicit so that decision makers can challenge them.

Starting from the conception of a global insurgency with widespread public support in Islam, much of the foreign internal defense language of the communist-inspired insurgency era remains germane. The same conditions exploited by communists are now exploited by Salafists. But foreign internal defense does not include regime change. Regime change can be accomplished by invading combat forces or by unconventional warfare.

Starting from the conception of a global insurgency waged by radicals numbering in the hundreds, the language of foreign internal defense is less useful. This conception is similar to declaring war on al Qaeda and associated movements (AQAM). Declaring a war on al Qaeda has the advantage of focusing resources on what is thought to be a manageable number of individuals. Under this conception, a global manhunt for the radicals is the dominant operational concept.

The invasion of Iraq was not in response to a Salafist-inspired insurgency. The policy statement for the conduct of such operations, therefore, is beyond the scope of this study. It is perhaps a desirable product of the NSC Board for Low Intensity Conflict.

Root Causes of the Threat

If U.S. policymakers choose to address the root causes of the insurgency rather than attacking the symptomatic threat, then they must decide which root causes of the insurgency are to be treated as variables whose values can be altered. One prominent view is that the root cause of the insurgency is the failure of certain states and societies to globalize or modernize. Others focus more on the failure of states to meet their responsibilities to the system of states (allowing sanctuary to terrorists) or failure to meet the needs of their populations. Still others cite specific

46 Michael Howard, "What's in a Name?" *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 1 (January/February 2002): 8-13. Grenville Byford, "The Wrong War," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002): 34-43.

U.S. and European policies as the cause, while still others see modernization and globalization as the cause of rather than the solution to the conflict. These failings were either causal or enabling of terrorism directed generally against the West and specifically against the United States. Some elements of the causal chain leading to the threat are shown in **Figure 2**.

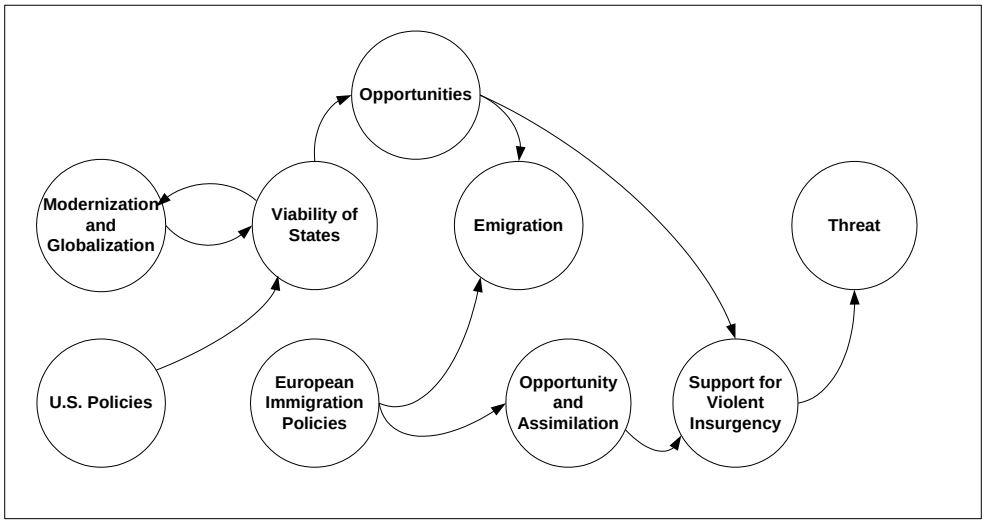

Figure 2. Causal Elements of the Threat

The insurgency is regional to the degree that one sees the problem as rooted in the north of Africa, the Levant, southwest and central Asia, Indonesia, and the southern Philippines: what has been referred to as the arc of chaos (see Figure 3). States within the region of conflict fail to provide opportunities to their populations and fail to meet their obligations to the system of states by allowing sanctuary or encouraging terrorists. These might be referred to collectively as the failed-state or failing-state theories.

Figure 3.
The Arc of Chaos (Failing States)

Westerners tend to think that the failure to modernize or globalize has caused the failure of states in the arc of chaos. The failure of the state, in turn, prevents or inhibits modernization and globalization. Modernization is not limited to exploitation of advancing technology but includes modernizing social structures as well.

Salafists, in direct opposition, see modernization and globalization as the cause of failure of the state and seek to return to the ways of the Salaf, the first three generations of Islam.

Salafists, as well as many others in the larger Muslim population, see U.S. policies that prop up corrupt regimes and exploit the region's oil wealth as contributing to state failure and to the lack of opportunity available to them.

The failed-state explanation is rejected by many who say that it misrepresents the threat. The true threat is distributed to modern cities in the first world, including Hamburg, London, Paris, and Montreal. Conditions in the failed and failing states in the arc of chaos induced emigration from the third world. Discriminatory domestic policies that fail to assimilate Muslim immigrants into European society better represents the proximate cause of the insurgency that threatens the United States. Those responsible for the attacks on 9/11 came directly from Western metropolises.

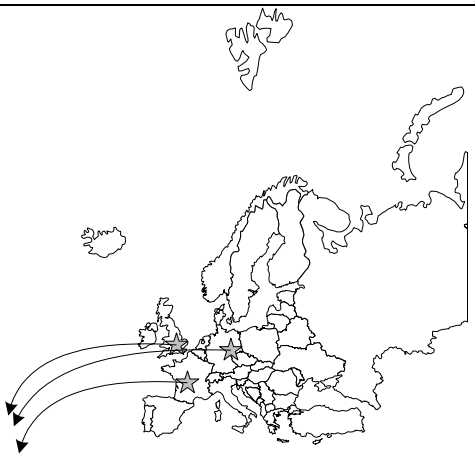

Figure 4.
First World Threats with Global Reach

Training facilities and sanctuaries in failed states like Afghanistan and Somalia are neither required nor particularly useful for training those who would attack the United States. The major cities of the developed Western world, however, are replete with the necessary training resources. Training facilities in Afghanistan principally produced forces trained in irregular warfare who returned to their homeland to train others. U.S. forces have encountered those irregular forces in Somalia and the Balkans, and they can expect to encounter them in any intervention into a country with a sizable Muslim population.

One often hears in U.S. declarations, "they hate us for who we are." Elsewhere, it is more common to hear, "they hate us for what we do." Implicitly, these are causal explanations of root causes for those who attack the United States. Usama bin Laden has made explicit in his declaration of war those things we do that are his casus belli—elements of our employment policy and our deployment policy. These policies are declared to be anti-Islamic,[47] and are:

- U.S. support for Israel that keeps Palestinians in the Israelis' thrall.
- U.S. and other Western troops on the Arabian Peninsula.
- U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- U.S. support for Russia, India, and China against their Muslim militants.
- U.S. pressure on Arab energy producers to keep oil prices low.
- U.S. support for apostate, corrupt, and tyrannical Muslim governments.

Clearly, we cannot change who we are, but we can change what we do, if we choose to do so. At least one credible authority postulates that if the United States is not willing to change the policies, identified as anti-Islamic, then the "war against Islam" view will gain ever-increasing support in the Muslim world.[48]

47 See for example, *Anonymous*, Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004), 241, written by Michael Scheuer, former CIA station chief for al Qaeda.
48 Scheuer 241goes so far as to predict that a strategy of annihilation would be required if policies are not changed. A strategy of annihilation involves wholesale destruction of people and infrastructure, including examples like the bombing of Dresden and Sherman's march to the sea.

Assumptions Underlying CT

The counterterrorist conception is one possible starting point for the necessary policy statement. The terrorists targeted are not simply all those who employ the tactic of terrorism; they are a knowable list of individuals with the will and the ability to do harm to the United States. The *manhunt* was the dominant operational concept supporting the counterterrorist conception. Find, fix, finish, and follow up is the doctrinal military construct that characterizes the manhunt.

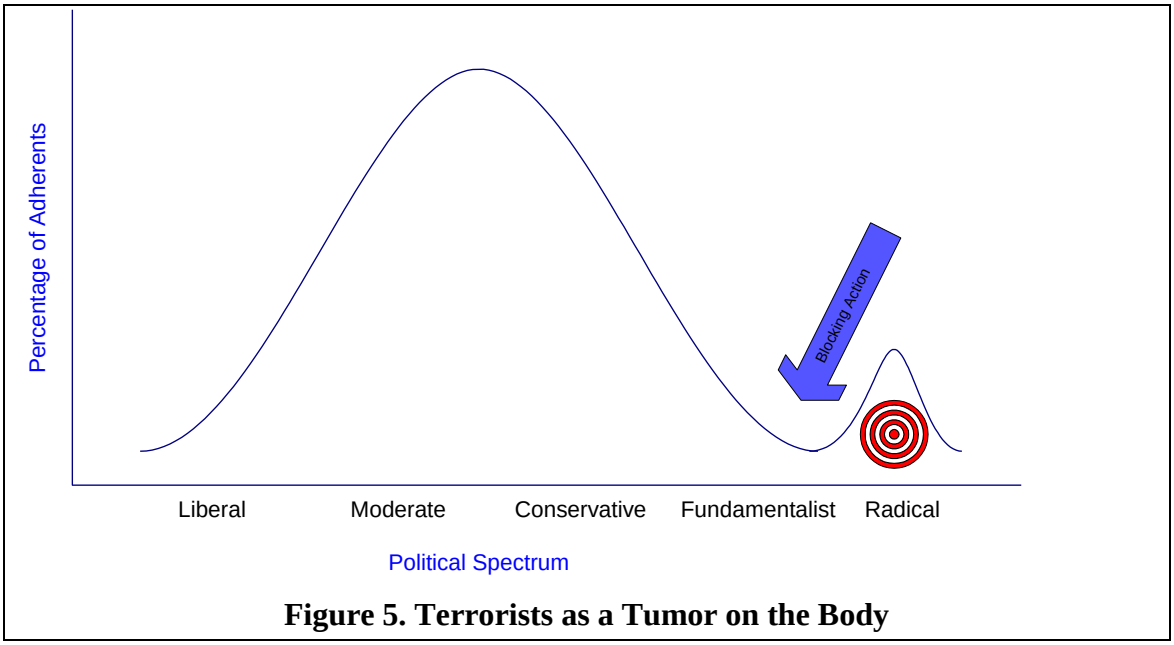

Figure 5. Terrorists as a Tumor on the Body

Figure 5 gives a graphical depiction of the counterterrorist conception. The threat to be dealt with is seen as an entity distinct from mainstream Islam. It is a tumor on the body of Islam and could be excised. The counterterrorist conception implies direct action against the specific terrorist threat and a blocking action to prevent spillover from the main body of Islam into the radicalized threat.

The bimodal distribution is coincident with the Islamic belief in the religious obligation to fight the near enemy and the view of a very small minority toward a religious obligation to fight the distant enemy. The near enemy includes both apostate governments in Muslim countries and foreign occupiers. The distant enemy resides beyond Muslim lands and for contemporary, practical purposes is the United States.

Assumptions Underlying CI

A second possible starting point for the national policy statement begins with the global counterinsurgency conception. A global insurgency requires an equally expansive global counterinsurgency strategy that orchestrates all instruments of national power, but the specific strategy chosen is driven by the targeted root causes. Because failed and failing states were seen by many as the proximate cause of the insurgency, *nation building* was the dominant operational concept supporting the counterinsurgency conception.

Rather than viewing the problem as one of terrorism or terrorist attacks, many suggest that the current conflict should be view as a widespread and growing social movement—an insurgency of global proportions. This view is of terrorism as a metastasized cancer rather than as a tumor on the body of Islam.[49] This leads to the notion of a tipping point. As the Islamic center of mass moves in small increments gradually either towards moderation or towards fundamentalism, a point is reached where the body politic tips and the rate of movement accelerates rapidly. Some analysts are more pessimistic than others on which way the Islamic population is moving.

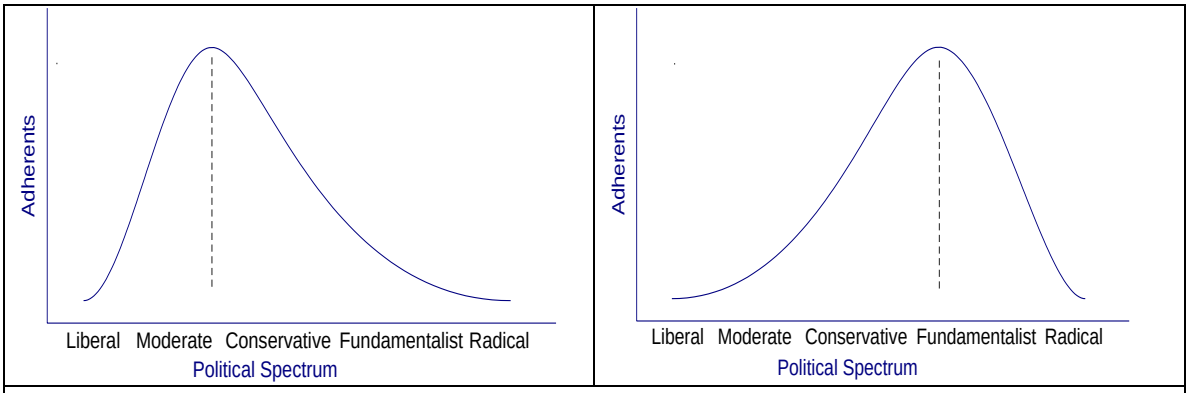

Figure 6. Terrorism as a Metastasized Cancer

Policy Statements

With respect to the GWOT, the most apparent and consequential conclusion is the lack of an official policy statement (the score) that assigns roles and missions to the many agencies of government that house the instruments of national power (the orchestra). One role to be identified is that of the day-to-day decisionmaker (the conductor). It is well beyond the authorities of the study team to remedy this situation directly. It is, however, possible to provide possible points of departure for the necessary policy statement to initiate the coordination process involving those who do have policymaking authority (the composers). The proper venue for that coordination process, by law, is the National Security Council.

Three inputs to the coordination process are offered here. The 1962 Overseas Internal Defense Policy is offered as an example of a thorough and clearly written policy statement for a similar policy domain.[50] The other two inputs are separate thumbnail sketches for counterinsurgency and counterterrorist conceptions.

The 1962 Overseas Internal Defense Policy serves as a possible point of departure from which a policy statement can be derived. The OIDP assumed that the threat was insurgency within states and the proper response was a state-by-state counterinsurgency strategy linking ends, ways, and means. Internal defense was the primary mechanism (way) of the counterinsurgency strategy. Lead was assigned to State, both at the NSC level and at the country

49 See for example, Scheuer 199.

50 National Security Council Special Group on Counterinsurgency, "U.S. Overseas Internal Defense Policy," Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 105, remains classified in the National Archives. Document 106, 382-383, is an unclassified summary. Both a recreation and a photocopy of the original redacted version, in PDF, will be provided on request from drworley@jhu.edu.

level. Appropriate supporting roles were assigned to USIA, USAID, DOD, and CIA, also at both the NSC and country levels.

A policy statement deriving from the counterinsurgency conception assumes that:

- the threat is a global insurgency,
- the proper response is a global counterinsurgency strategy,
- nation building is the primary way of the counterinsurgency strategy,
- nation building may begin with regime change.

The draft policy statement might be entitled the Global Counterinsurgency Policy (GCIP). For the GCIP, the NSC Board for Low Intensity Conflict is chosen as the locus of control for counterinsurgency policy because it was established in law for exactly this purpose and has the statutory authorities needed. State is the lead agency and chairs the Board. The ends sought include reduction of the incidence of attack on the United States, reduction of the severity of attacks on the United States, and reduction of the likelihood of the conflict spilling over into a larger war. The means involved include strong contributions from all the agencies of government that wield the instruments of national power. The GCIP provides the policy, describes the process, and assigns roles and missions for the orchestration of the instruments of national power.

An alternative policy statement deriving from the counterinsurgency conception assumes that:

- the threat is a group of terrorists that act globally,
- the proper response is a global counterterrorist strategy, and
- manhunt is the primary way of the counterterrorist strategy.

The policy statement might be entitled the Global Counterterrorist Policy (GCTP). The NSC Committee on Transnational Threats is a reasonable choice as locus of control for the counterterrorist policy because its statutory authorities span terrorist activity, narcotics trafficking, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and organized crime; in response to a specific event, no doubt, crisis management would take place in the White House. For the GCTP, there is no natural lead agency.[51] The NSA would chair the relevant NSC committee seconded by the deputy NSA for combating terrorism. The ends sought include reduction of the incidence of attack on the United States, reduction of the severity of attack on the United States, and reduction of the likelihood of the conflict spilling over into a larger war. The means employed are principally intelligence, law enforcement, and the counterterrorist components of DOD, specifically, those within SOCOM. The GCTP provides the policy, describes the process, and assigns roles and missions for the orchestration of the relevant instruments of national power. Both policies require integration of foreign, military, and domestic policies and the actions of the agencies that implement those policies. Thus, the composer for both policy statements resides within the NSC. Whatever eventual policy statement is crafted, it should provide as a minimum, four things:

- a conception of the conflict, including threat, interests and objectives, and strategy;
- a process for overseeing the conflict that defines and implements policy;
- identification of the departments and agencies that have roles to play; and
- assignment of roles and missions to those departments and agencies.

51 Secretary Rumsfeld clearly recognized the problem within the Defense Department. See Scarborough 183.

Compared to the era of the communist-inspired insurgency and the OIDP, today's instruments of power are more diverse and their relationships to USG agencies are not nearly as straightforward. Roles and missions assignments must be made nonetheless. The detailed assignment of roles and missions is left to the interagency policymaking process.

Each policy alternative requires both policymaking and policy implementation. Each policy alternative should assign the policymaking and policy implementation to separate bodies.

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