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THE GLOBAL COUNTER INSURGENCY: America's New National Security and Foreign Policy Paradigm

Jonathan Morgenstein & Eric Vickland

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THE GLOBAL COUNTER INSURGENCY:

America's New National Security and Foreign Policy Paradigm

By Jonathan Morgenstein and Eric Vickland

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The contemporary environment...features a new kind of globalized insurgency, represented by Al Qaida, which seeks to transform the Islamic world and reorder its relationship with the rest of the globe. Such groups feed on local grievances, integrate them into broader ideologies, and link disparate conflicts through globalized communications, finances, and technology. While the scale of the effort is new, the grievances and methods that sustain it are not. As in other insurgencies, terrorism, subversion, propaganda, and open warfare are its tools. But defeating such an enemy requires a similarly globalized response to deal with the array of linked resources and conflicts that sustain it.

General David H. Petraeus, US Army

Lieutenant General James N. Mattis, USMC

Authors of the new Army/ Marine Corps manual of Counterinsurgency doctrine

Introduction

Sixty years ago, George Kennan penned his landmark Foreign Affairs article that defined American foreign policy for the next half century. Seminal security policy decisions such as the creation of NATO, the blockade of Cuba and the Berlin airlift were all components of the policy of Containment. Today, a radical Islamic ideology seeks our destruction, yet we lack a unifying doctrine on which to base our foreign policy. Al Qaida and its ideological compatriots represent a worldwide insurgency based on religious extremism. At its core it is a political struggle with political aims and in order to defeat it, we need adapt our means to the nature of the struggle. We are not fighting a war on terrorism. We are fighting a global insurgency against an extremist brand of Islam.

To achieve victory in this conflict, we require a comprehensive paradigm that will address global asymmetric threats. We propose that doctrine be based upon a Global Counterinsurgency and that it become the guidepost for all major US Foreign Policy, in much the same way that George Kennan's anonymous proposal became the focal point for US foreign policy during the Cold War.

The Global Insurgency *not* Global War on Terrorism

The world witnessed our overwhelming victory over Saddam Hussein's conventional military in 1991, Serbia's in 1999, the Taliban's in 2002 and Hussein's again in 2003. Anyone paying attention realized the futility of challenging the US on a conventional battlefield. Conversely, any potential enemy has seen our inability to defeat unconventional forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is clear to any potential challenger that their political aims are best achieved through insurgency.

So far, we have failed to understand the enemy we are fighting and how to defeat it. Labeling our fight as a “War on Terror” obscures the actual threat. Terrorism is only a tactic and not the ideology with which we are at war. That ideology is a violent, global strain of Salafism, commonly referred to as Wahhabism. Salafism is a two century-old brand of Islam and the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia. Al Qaida is only the most visible adherent of this violent strain and our inability to accurately define the enemy keeps us from developing the strategic concepts and methods needed to defeat it.

Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, Lieutenant General William G. Boykin has stated clearly that al Qaida is a global insurgency using terrorism as a weapon. While LTG Boykin and other national security professionals understand the nature of the threat we face, this important distinction is not part of America’s national political dialogue. As Daniel Benjamin, former Director of Transnational Threats for the National Security Council observed, “America’s top decision makers have not recognized that we face a global insurgency,” as evidenced by our misguided emphasis on the wrong toolbox. Our ability to discuss—let alone understand—the threat we face has become clouded by domestic political rhetoric invested more with emotion than reason.

The reality is that the threat extends beyond a puritanical movement. Al Qaida and its associated movement have accommodated itself to pragmatic realities similar to other insurgencies. Their accommodations are best described by what Tamara Makarenko calls the Crime Terror Nexus: a symbiosis of extremism, organized crime and the grey economy. As Dr. Makarenko notes, affiliates such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Taliban, have developed close relations with Central Asian heroin dealers. Profiting from the narcotics trade may be inexcusable in traditional Islam, but this insurgency has made compromises to achieve its goals.

These are the modern insurgency’s dynamics. However it conforms to Mao Zedong’s three phases of classical guerrilla warfare: 1) organization, consolidation and preservation, 2) progressive expansion, and 3) a culminating and decisive phase where the enemy is destroyed. Our enemy is simultaneously engaged in all three, in different parts of the world. In Europe’s urban ghettos, these networks are recruiting and fostering a core of future supporters. They are implementing the second phase in Kashmir, the Philippines and Turkey, by provoking confrontations with the West and thus globalizing their struggle through appeals to dispossessed Muslims worldwide. In Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iraq the stage is being set for the third phase—the ascent to power which will facilitate a clash of civilizations and the achievement of a global caliphate.

This worldwide insurgency represents the world’s greatest threat to the security of the United States and our allies. Thus, defeating it must be the primary focus of our national security policy. To defeat al Qaida requires that we reprioritize not only our military resources but the whole range of our foreign policy assets—political, economic and social—in order to target the threat from all sides.

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), staked out the Bush administration’s priorities for the next four years. Unfortunately, it under-emphasized the very non-traditional tools that are most effective at neutralizing this non-traditional threat. Instead, the QDR focused on a missile defense that may prevent a strike by North Korea on Japan and the F-22 jet fighter which will help ensure American air dominance. However, these weapons will minimally impact al Qaida’s global insurgency.

Counter insurgency requires we alter the nature of our defense “weapons”. The “hearts and minds” tools of the United States government must be strengthened. Military civil affairs assets, wedded to the traditional development capabilities of US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the development community, can provide effective stabilization and reconstruction

in fractured states, such as in Afghanistan's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Intelligence gathered by human and technical means can more effectively inform decision makers if we have the linguistic and analytic capability to process it. That the US military fields more band members than it does Arabic and Farsi speaking interpreters is simply one of the many indications of our current myopic national security posture.

The Global Counter Insurgency

The basic doctrine of Global Counterinsurgency has been written over a long history. The first lesson of counterinsurgency is that a disproportionate over-emphasis on military force is counterproductive. Former head of Central Command General John Abizaid testified before Congress that defeating the insurgency "requires not only military pressure... [but] all elements of international and national power."

His statement mirrors the *Small Wars Manual*, the Marine Corps' bible for combating guerrilla warfare, which states, "The application of purely military measures may not, by itself restore peace and orderly government because the fundamental causes of the condition of unrest may be economic, political, or social." Thus to win such a conflict, armed troops must remember that, "[a] force Commander who gains his objective... without firing a shot has attained far greater success than one who resorted to the use of arms."

Army LTC John Nagl is a veteran of both Iraq wars and author of the authoritative counterinsurgency book, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. According to Nagl, an insurgency cannot survive without the "economic and political foundations" of discontent, suffering and/or oppression, present in the society. He advocates non-traditional military tools that neutralize these bases of support for the insurgency. Given the ability to "live as decent human beings" and assuming the presence of a "strong, just government," popular support for the insurgency is seriously undermined. When the insurgents lose popular support, "mopping up of the hard-core die-hards is fairly easy." The enemy we face is a worldwide insurgency, similar to the ones Nagl addresses in his book. Thus, we need the full spectrum of counterinsurgency tools, just as Nagl describes, to defeat this global threat.

III. The Five Pillars of Counterinsurgency:

We have distilled the keys to a successful counterinsurgency down to five equally vital pillars: 1) targeted military force and security, 2) intelligence, 3) law enforcement and the rule of law, 4) information operations, and 5) civil affairs and development. Taken together, these five pillars constitute the essential framework needed to guide America's post 9-11 national security policy. It must be understood that this is distinctly *not* a military policy, nor a policy to guide the Department of Defense (DoD). This is a National Security Policy, for which we must re-focus the entire national security and foreign policy apparatus. This is a doctrine that must provoke reforms not only in the DoD, but also the Department of State (DoS), USAID, a re-established US Information Agency (USIA), and across the intelligence community.

President Bush acknowledged these concepts in National Security Presidential Directive 44 (NSPD-44). The entity established to implement this interagency collaboration is the DoS's State Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). Yet, zero resources to implement these reforms were allocated to S/CRS in fiscal year 2006 and appropriations for every operational S/CRS dollar required the signature of both Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State. The failure to allocate these resources directly is one indication of how low held a priority these counterinsurgency concepts have been by the current administration. Current national security policy puts America at risk by minimizing individual components of this doctrine and overemphasizing only the first pillar, targeted military force.

a. Military Force and Security

We were compelled and justified in taking down the Taliban just as we would any regime that materially supports those that attack us and our allies. Clearly, full-fledged warfare is at times essential to destroying threats to America and her allies. However, in this asymmetric struggle, we must focus more often on the *discriminate* use of force such as Special Operations Forces (SOF) hunting jihadists in Afghanistan and North Africa. Our SOF capabilities must be expanded to more effectively hunt down those we cannot convince to end their destructive crusade. Simultaneously, we must invest in the professionalization of allied military forces across the world. We must train allied militaries in the same advanced counterinsurgency skills—to include respect for human rights and winning the hearts and minds of their own populations—discussed in this article.

Security also involves isolating the insurgency from external support networks. Strong borders are crucial to disrupting the insurgent communications and logistical networks. At the same time, we must recognize that unstable societies and weak states are contagious, regional threats. Where the insurgency finds safe-havens of chaos, instability and the lack of sovereign territorial control—such as Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan—threats against our security can metastasize. It is because of this need to contain and compartmentalize the movement of the insurgency, that the stability of remote and seemingly “insignificant” countries are relevant to America’s most basic national interest.

In the end, the execution of violent force is at times inevitable. There truly are bad people out there with the full, intent to do us harm: to kill us and our families. They desire not just to remake their own lands but to destroy ours and our vision of civilization. These must be hunted down and killed.

However, this is a precision effort that requires surgical accuracy. Writ large, the primary focus of any successful counterinsurgency effort must be non-violent and political. The insurgent knows this and that is why he chooses his targets so deliberately. According to French Colonel David Galula, arguably the 20th Century’s top expert on counterinsurgency, to the insurgent, “attrition of the enemy [in this case, us] is a by-product of guerrilla warfare, not its essential goal.” His goal is a political, not a military victory. Thus ours must be as well.

b. Intelligence

In a conventional military confrontation, locating major enemy forces is easy. They are big formations with a sizable footprint. Therefore, the crucial question isn’t “where is the enemy?” It is, “Can we maneuver our assets sufficiently to destroy him?” However, most of our current national security infrastructure is still formatted to deal with this type of military confrontation. In an insurgency the challenge is not destroying the enemy, it is finding him. Thus, intelligence is a more critical component to counterinsurgency than it is to conventional conflicts.

Our intelligence system was designed to fight the Cold War, and so must be re-vamped to defeat this new threat. Ostensibly, intelligence would do more than just locate those that threaten us like Osama bin Laden. However, we are not even allocating enough resources for this effort. On July 3, 2006, The New York Times reported that the CIA dismantled their task force dedicated explicitly to hunting down bin Laden. Domestically, only 33 out of the FBI’s 12,000 agents hold even *limited* Arabic skills.

One problem is a severe lack of CIA field agents. According to John MacGaffin, a 31 year veteran of the CIA, we have less than twelve hundred in the entire world. We must expand these operational capacities, and specifically the size of our Human Intelligence capabilities to reach

the far corners of the earth. One of our strongest national resources is the kaleidoscope of ethnicities that make up the US citizenry. Harvesting this resource would allow us to place human assets around the world where they can blend in without arousing suspicion.

Our expanded presence and preparedness should apply beyond the obvious Arab and Muslim worlds, but should also include intelligence infrastructure in all potential threat areas of the Third World: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We should be cultivating intelligence networks to anticipate threats *before* they arise. We need eyes and ears in every corner of the globe, always alert for subtle changes that herald operatives of the global insurgency. As *The Small Wars Manual* observes, “Local garrisons must become so familiar with their sub districts that any changes or unusual conditions will immediately be apparent.” Those that feel it is sufficient to place our efforts in already-recognized regions such as the Middle East must take note of South America’s “Tri-Border” region. This remote corner where Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina converge is a meeting ground of Hezbollah and other terrorist as well as organized criminal elements. This remote location threatens to become a major hub of the global insurgency. We must be willing to post agents of American interest in these dangerous and remote, but important, corners of the world.

Beyond actionable intelligence, our diplomatic and development representatives, clandestine operatives and military troops overseas must become more knowledgeable and experienced in the cultures, languages and psychology of the countries in which they operate. Cultural intelligence is perhaps our most deficient national security asset. How can we win over large sections of the world when we have no real comprehension of their cultures and world views? The *Small Wars Manual* observed that, “An officer possessing a working knowledge of the language, a knowledge of the psychology of the people, good powers of observation, and who has associated with the average civilian in the outlying districts for a month...” is the one who will identify the dangerous elements of a society, or win over key indigenous leaders to secure victory against the insurgency’s local manifestations. Our intelligence, diplomatic and development personnel must become repositories of cultural understanding for our government to utilize in developing more effective policies.

c. Law Enforcement and Rule of Law

The present administration has downplayed the role of police-work in the Global Counterinsurgency. However, a single border guard foiled the Millennium Bomber’s New Year’s plans and the FBI and New York police rolled-up an al Qaida cell in Lackawanna, NY. Comprehensive law enforcement is critical to combating terrorist cells and dismantling the enemy’s financial networks. From the beat cop to Interpol, effective police operations are crucial to suffocating both the Global Insurgency’s core and its support system.

Conservative columnist George Will has asserted that—from Pakistan to Great Britain—military might has proven not to be the top tool for this global struggle. Instead, expert law enforcement in these countries validates the belief that “many of the interdiction tactics that cripple drug lords, including governments working jointly to share intelligence, patrol borders and force banks to identify suspicious customers can also be some of the most useful tools in the war on terror.” Strengthening international police collaboration will handicap the insurgency’s capacity to build safe-havens from which to strike at us and our allies.

Just as important as law enforcement in the form of police and police-work, is the rule-of-law. Strengthening court systems in weak countries means that justly convicted criminals remain behind bars. It means that corruption doesn’t reach the stage where insurgents can smuggle weapons and bombs past checkpoints and borders with a nod, a wink and a few hundred dollars to a guard. And it means that local populations feel vested in their state, and thus less likely to be seduced by the insurgent’s siren song of rebellion. We must establish a branch within the Justice

Department that expands current capacities to develop effective policing and rule-of-law worldwide.

d. Information Operations

Information Operations (IO), often called public diplomacy or strategic communications, are instrumental in winning over the “undecideds” amongst which the enemy hides and recruits. Effective IO campaigns promote America’s charity and expose the enemy’s hypocrisy. Our IO effort promoting U.S. Tsunami relief transformed Indonesian public opinion, raising popular support for combating terrorism from 23% to 50%, according to University of Michigan Professor Scott Atran. Professor Atran noted, “These polls indicate... that the anti-Americanism that helps sustain the jihadi cult of martyrdom could yet be reversed.” Conversely, an effective information campaign could publicize al Qaida’s past blood diamond trade with Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front, whose fighters deliberately amputated the limbs of thousands of children as portrayed in the movie *Blood Diamond*.

The complicity—or at least passivity—of a surrounding population is essential to an insurgency’s survival. Likewise, the key to defeating al Qaida’s nihilist vision lies in convincing the masses of the world that their lot is better thrown in with an American global vision of independence, peace, and the rule of law. Once a population chooses to side with the prevailing system and the rule of law, they will defend that system from those who would destroy it. It was members of the British Muslim community that tipped off British security to the August 10, 2006 plot to take down multiple US-bound airliners. COL Galula explained that, “The key to guerrilla warfare, indeed to the insurgency...has been expressed in the formula of the fish swimming in the water.” A powerful information campaign undermines the insurgency’s (the fish) ability to win over or intimidate the local population (the water), thereby leaving it easily identifiable and vulnerable.

Unfortunately, the Clinton administration dismantled the USIA and rolled it into the DoS as the Bureau of Public Affairs. We need an agency to master all the media tools of the 21st century from the internet to radios, from rumor mills to videos and CDs. We must re-establish USIA and re-invigorate it with the resources and expertise to influence world opinions. A USIA seat on the National Security Council could communicate to the President how America is perceived worldwide, and participate in developing policies to effect those perceptions.

e. Civil Affairs

Both the impoverished individual, who straps a bomb to his chest, and those from educated classes like Mohammad Atta and Osama bin Laden can gravitate towards extremism when their societies’ needs are not met due to economic and political dysfunction. Civil Affairs can address these dysfunctions through strategic economic and political development campaigns, the cultivation of civil society institutions and a respect for human rights. One of the basic principles of counterinsurgency is that when developing-world populations obtain economic opportunity, social dignity, and political empowerment, they will no longer incubate insurgencies. Civil Affairs is a valuable and under-utilized weapon in our Global Counterinsurgency.

Ending poverty and dislocation is easier said than done. Development experts from the international aid communities have often been the harshest critics of an international development system that has largely failed for the past fifty years. USAID, the World Bank, and numerous development Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have invested billions of dollars resulting in systemic dependency. Successes occur in spite of—not because of institutional incentives; USAID rewards the production of reports and the spending of money, *not* satisfying metrics indicating tangible progress.

There are signs that development assistance *can* work. Local development projects such as the micro-financing have yielded impressive and self-sustaining results. A scathing critic of current development efforts himself, New York University Economics Professor William Easterly accepted that foreign aid has vastly improved certain indicators across the world such as infant mortality and childhood education.

However, such programs have the advantage of measurable goals and effective metrics of success. Nevertheless, most current development programs lack such clarity and have few such standards. Micro-lending is successful because it has three pass-or-fail metrics: 1) incomes grow; 2) then the number of people earning more, expands; 3) this expansion becomes self-perpetuating, requiring no outside assistance. USAID on the other hand rarely establishes metrics of success. It neither systematically holds its contractors accountable for poor performances nor rewards them for positive results.

This article is too short to responsibly critique all the international aid system's shortcomings, but it is sufficient to note how little effort, time and money the developed world spends addressing the dysfunctions of the development sector. The fact is that economic development—done right—could be the most effective weapon in counterinsurgency, drying up the recruiting base upon which insurgents rely to fill their ranks. Nevertheless, while the DoD was allotted over half a trillion dollars in 2006, USAID's budget was barely nine billion. Thus, last year the first pillar, (security) received over fifty-times the funding as the fifth (Civil Affairs and development). The restructuring and expansion of USAID is essential to our new national security effort.

IV. The Politics of It All

Despite the inherent merits of this doctrine, many policy makers and pundits have raised opposition to these ideas. This kind of foreign policy is only possible if both liberal and conservative politicians can both be convinced of its value. Without showing both sides that these concepts are in the vital interests of the United States, the Global Counterinsurgency paradigm will remain a theory, rather than policy.

Grounded in solid *conservative* security philosophy

Some will argue this doctrine is *soft*—that it sends the wrong message to those that threaten us. But these policies are drawn from hard-earned lessons by those who have fought and died in counterinsurgency struggles around the world for 150 years. These lessons are codified in the Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual*, which states:

“In major warfare, hatred of the enemy is developed among troops to arouse courage. In small wars, tolerance, sympathy and kindness should be the keynote of our relationship with the mass of the population.”

Former Congressman and Cabinet Secretary Jack Kemp heads a long list of conservatives whose statements support this article's conclusions. In a 2004 OpEd, he wrote that Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. Kemp argued that, in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq, de Soto “knows all too well that in order to prevent terrorism from arising again or spreading, force must be leavened with enlightened policies to give people hope of a better life and a democratic future.” De Soto himself observed, “To give people a stake in the economy to prove to them that government is in the business of including them in formal society, is to put the terrorists out of business.”

President Bush lent credence, in philosophical terms, to these concepts when he spoke of the need for democratization and economic liberalization in the Middle East, arguing that such reforms are the keys to ending the extremism, violence and terrorism that plagues the region.

Grounded in solid *liberal* security philosophy

Simultaneously, many on the left may be put-off by the label of “counterinsurgency” which to them conjures images of past human rights abuses in Central America and Vietnam. However, the term counterinsurgency has been widely misused and misunderstood. Its core tenets repudiate the abuses often attached to its name. “Methods of extracting information,” the *Small Wars Manual* advises, “which are not countenanced by the laws of war and the customs of humanity cannot be tolerated.” Adherence to the principles of human rights is, in fact, essential to successful counterinsurgency.

Every abuse committed damages our ability to win-over the fence-sitters of the world. No one will join our side simply because we claim the moral high ground. They will join our cause only if they believe that America represents democracy, liberty and the rule of law. Therefore, our victory depends on our adherence to these principles.

The Global Counterinsurgency is based on progressive values and principles. Inherent is the cultivation of alliances, not the alienation of old friends. Winning over other countries and cultures by our actions helps to deligitimize our enemy. We must treat others with respect and dignity to win over ambivalent populations and not inflame them. We must pull the poor of the world from poverty. We must peacefully, but actively, promote the liberalization and democratization of oppressive regimes... because only that will destroy the breeding grounds in which the insurgency incubates and thrives.

Of course these ideas are not new to liberal foreign policy. President Kennedy used similar ideas in his Alliance for Progress, a program predicated on the notion that a free and prosperous hemisphere was essential to America’s national security. “Unless we broaden the opportunity of all of our people, unless the great mass of [Latin] Americans share in increasing prosperity,” Kennedy declared, “then our alliance, our revolution, our dream, and our freedom will fail.”

Likewise the Global Counterinsurgency is an echo of President Truman’s Marshall Plan. The revived economic and political stability of Western Europe caused those exposed to the Marshall Plan to turn away from the Soviets. Utilizing the fifth pillar, (Civil Affairs), we must combat poverty and social dislocation to inoculate developing societies from extremism, in the same way the Marshall Plan inoculated Western Europe from Communist extremism.

Other essential aspects of long term security

None of these pillars precludes other crucial components of our security policy. The Global Counterinsurgency should guide and inform policy, such as ending our dependency on foreign oil, which has incubated the insurgency for decades. However, it need not drive every aspect of our engagement on the international scene. What is important is that nothing we do should fundamentally contradict its central tenets.

Reigning in Iranian nuclear weapons development and containing North Korea remain crucial to our national security but neither contradicts the importance of counterinsurgency. Likewise, this doctrine does not rule out wariness of rival great powers such as China and Russia and geopolitical fissures they desire to exploit. In the end, we must seek the assistance of the international community to help us, but in order to have friends, we must be a friend. We must rebuild alliances rubbed raw over the past six years, renew commitments, and expand our circle of friends.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps teaches that *Leadership* is 1) mission accomplishment, and 2) caring for subordinates. We have spent too much time simply *declaring* ourselves as leaders without focusing on the mission and without focusing on caring for our friends. By re-building, and fertilizing strong alliances, we will make America stronger. Forgetting this has perhaps been the greatest mistake of the Bush administration: if we had remembered this principle, we might have pulled off the invasion and occupation of Iraq successfully.

In the end, the al Qaida insurgency is flawed and will fail. It seeks to enforce on a modern world, an ideology that has no regard for the varieties of culture, history and individual beliefs. The question is not, if we will win, but when. Is this a war that we will be forced to fight for ten years or fifty? The answer will come from our ability to see the struggle for what it is and bring to bear against it the weapons required to end it.

The nature of the international enemy is not terrorism, but a globalized insurgency, which demands the methods of *counterinsurgency* to defeat it. Those methods emphasize not just military force, but the entire array of tools at our disposal. We must engage in the overhaul of our national assets and structures to defend our way of life. We must do so under a new national security and foreign policy paradigm: The Global Counterinsurgency.