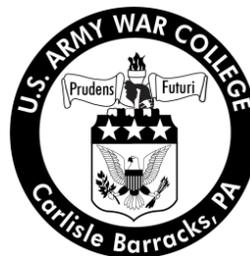


Herding Black Cats: Leveraging Non-Lethal Effects to Preserve Peace

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2014

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The U.S. National Security Strategy says that America still bears the burden of global leadership. For nearly a century, Americans have considered themselves exceptional and an example for the rest of the world, but the old ways of holding onto power are slipping, and a new world order is slowly encroaching upon the United States. This monograph asserts that it is time for a divergent approach to the future of warfare and it is time to reverse long-held ideas on what should be the main effort, what capabilities should take center stage, and what strategic effects the U.S. should focus on resourcing. In a coming era of smaller defense budgets and fewer troops, the U.S. military must learn to use the force it has available to greatest effect and focus the funding pipeline to the various occupational specialties that influence change rather than force it.

Herding Black Cats: Leveraging Non-Lethal Effects to Preserve Peace

Black cat, white cat. It doesn't matter. All that matters is that it catches mice.

—Deng Xiaoping¹

What is the importance of a strong America? The U.S. National Security Strategy says that America still bears the burden of global leadership.² Ask an average American citizen if the United States is considered a global leader, and the answer will most likely be yes. Upon further thought, that same average American may ask a question of his own: did something change when I wasn't looking? The importance of that follow-on question lies in the customary global role of the United States. For nearly a century, Americans have considered themselves exceptional and an example for the rest of the world or at least for other democracies. The old ways of holding onto power are slipping however, and a new world order is slowly encroaching upon the United States. The heated, collective breath of countries such as China, India, Turkey and Russia are competing for the global racetrack's coveted first lane in the race to world dominance. To maintain the lead, the United States must abandon the idea of running individually and relying on past training methods. Those methods will always permit continued participation in the race, but to really win, the United States must be willing to consider running as part of an international, combined relay team. Specifically, U.S. military leadership must begin to consider its other capabilities when waging war and redirect influence operations to be the main effort instead of using military influence specialties in their traditional supporting roles.

The world will not see conventional conflicts like World War I and World War II again. Starting in 1953, when the embers of discontent and diametrically opposed

ideologies between North and South Korea amounted to a still-seething demilitarized zone, Americans have repeatedly dealt with unconventional rather than conventional war. Before the era of the Global War on Terror, in the U.S.' last major conflict in Vietnam, the Viet Cong insurgency proved elusive, as was any sort of "victory". The two present-day wars of insurgency with which Americans are most familiar in Iraq and Afghanistan illustrate the point, as they are unique in their specifics but not dissimilar generally. Insurgency is the vilest type of warfare; it is underhanded and dangerous, marked by clashes of entrenched ideology and rampant, easily fueled feelings of disenfranchisement. It is present even in situations that at the outset seem like a tidy little war as in the Bosnian conflict. Speaking from a muddy tactical operations center in Bosnia in April of 1996, a U.S. Army colonel likened insurgency to the Sisyphean task every housewife knows well, "It's sort of like washing dishes: just when you think you've got the last dish done, you've got to eat again and make more dirty dishes".³

Insurgency as a way of waging war is an old technique that has never gone away, but because Afghanistan and Iraq have dominated the news wires for so long, it somehow seems that insurgency is a new and unique challenge, and the U.S. military cannot handle it. Pundits and various media critics routinely and derisively mutter that the American military is failing, the root of their sarcasm founded quite solidly in the frustration of the last 13 years of U.S. involvement in both Afghanistan and Iraq, so far with futile results.⁴ The truth is, the American public would have to go back nearly 70 years to find a war that ended with an unconditional surrender, and insurgencies of the past rarely had definable outcomes.

Regardless of the past, it is time for something different because the future globalized world is unlike anything that came before now. It is time to define the U.S. military's role in a different way and utilize it in a manner that yields the best and greatest effects. During the last decade, the U.S. military has kidded itself that it is maintaining pace with the future of warfare. It is true that in terms of lethal results, the U.S. military has proven itself over and over in its ability to neutralize a designated high-value target, but where the military has failed is in its repeated inability to connect meaningfully with the population that supports and offers sanctuary to that target. Instead of ham-fistedly insisting on the American way, which usually ends with adversaries' dug-in heels or their tacit surface agreement underpinned by a determination to refute our ambitions, the military must investigate how to more effectively influence allies and enemies alike. The military must adjust to a pragmatic way forward in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) geopolitical environment. This monograph asserts that it is time for a divergent approach to the future of warfare and it is time to reverse the long-held ideas on what should be the main effort, what capabilities should take center stage, and what strategic effects the U.S. should focus on resourcing. In a coming era of smaller defense budgets and fewer troops, the U.S. military must learn to use the force it has available to greatest effect and focus the funding pipeline to the various occupational specialties that influence change rather than force it.

Situation

It is an inexorable and disagreeable truth that sometimes war is necessary. Countries and nation-states maintain strong militaries for just such a possibility, and some would say to prevent war. Expecting an armed force to prevent war is not logical,

useful, or productive, and will inevitably devolve into radical and sometimes nonsensical efforts, not addressing any conceivable geopolitical situation realistically.⁵ The phrase preserving peace, however, has a different tone, meaning, and communicated goal. To strive for preserving peace allows for non-linear, unencumbered problem solving that takes advantage of every angle and of every school of thought. Eventually, because of its very definition, preserving peace leads to an end state of a stable and prosperous environment.

The world has changed irrevocably, and the United States' general population has changed along with it, yet the U.S. military appears to be entrenched in an awkward crouch, so accustomed to its habitual posture that it finds it painful and nearly impossible to stand up and move forward. The erosion of U.S. popular support for the military's current methods of waging war has instituted national fatigue and has fostered a deep reticence in employing the military in general and in the lethal aspects of the military's conventional forces in particular, but the military seems pugnaciously hesitant to adapt. The adoration and unprecedented high regard for the American military is disputably at its peak; it will not last.⁶ The number of U.S. citizens in uniform is currently hovering at approximately one percent of the population and is more and more considered a family business and as such "a legion apart".⁷ A lack of empathy derived from a niche population base is a political problem to solve, but the military digs its own image grave when it consistently pops up in the news over good order and discipline issues such as the heinous pictures in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, general officers who cannot resist denigrating their civilian leadership, and an ethnically and culturally homogenous leadership culture that refuses to accept outside help in a scourge as

insidious and rampant as sexual assault. Issues like the former three are evidence that those of us serving are fortunate to be regarded positively by our American public at all.

The toxic stew of a war-weary national base, perceived reduced American global standing, and a national economy that is routinely put on life support is contaminated even more by the reality that the United States will no longer be able to support or sustain a large fighting force in the future. The U.S. armed forces will decrease in number until they reach 450,000 members, though 420,000 is a more realistic number.⁸ If the U.S. is going to employ a sparser military, its military leadership will absolutely need to use all of its service members to the greatest optimal effectiveness. The military, specifically the U.S. Army, would be better served to invest in forces that are widely deployable, commonly acceptable, and cheaply employable across a wider spectrum of missions, the preponderance of which are Phase Zero operations.

Phase Zero operations, or shaping operations, are military operations at their most basic level, though basic does not equate to unsophisticated. This phase is marked by its consistence and permanence as illustrated in Figure 1. Phase Zero ways and means continue shaping the environment throughout a military operation, and this paper's premise is that if they are employed carefully, deliberately, and consistently, they will prevent more costly phases such as Domination and Stabilization. Through Phase Zero's hallmarks of security cooperation and influence operations, the U.S. military can possibly avoid a contingency plan's implementation.⁹

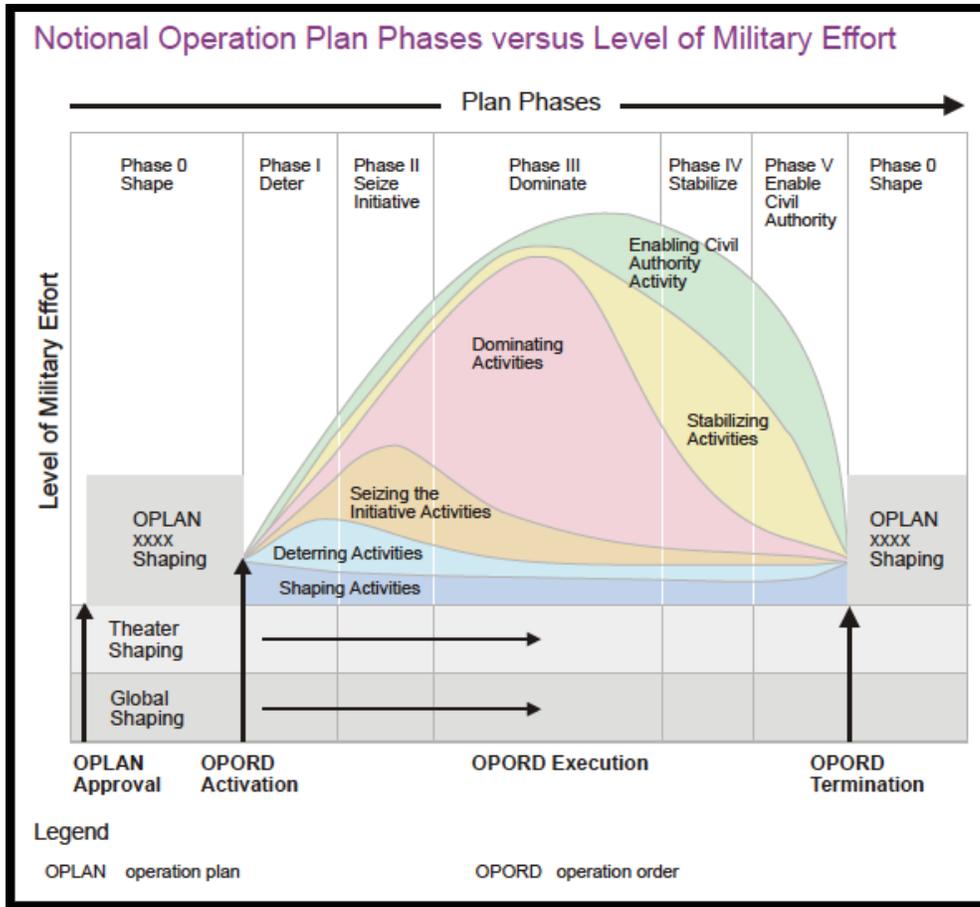


Figure 1. Notional Operation Plan Phases¹⁰

The objective observer will see that Phase Zero missions require a broader mission set and a broader demographic, as well as a consistent number of forward-deployed troops, all while the U.S. military is decreasing in size. This is a timely coincidence for female troops, given the current U.S. environment of shrinking defense and national budgets, declining military force numbers, and the need for a paradigm shift in how the U.S. military views employment of the total force. No matter which side the blogosphere and political news programs sway both the biggest proponents and the staunchest opponents regarding the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a woman in the armed forces, the prevailing outcome will always be that women are smart – just as

smart as their male counterparts. The U.S. military needs the women it currently employs now more than ever in order to sustain a viable total force projection. Unfortunately, women are often eclipsed and underutilized. Using non-lethal capabilities is not just about what skills the U.S. military employs, it is also about their composition – namely, leveraging existing human capital to optimal effect. The U.S. military cannot afford to under-employ its female service members. The U.S. must pay attention to societal and political cues and use its armed forces more wisely in the coming years of lean budgets and a dwindling personnel pool.

Because the idea of a muddy-boots conflict scenario is now an anathema to the American public, it is increasingly unlikely that the military will be able to sustain its current methods and tactics. There are even critics who believe that the U.S. State Department should take over many of the core competencies that currently reside in the Defense Department. Militarizing the U.S. diplomatic corps, or alternatively, granting U.S. diplomats absolute control over military missions and elements would be, in either case, both unrealistic and resoundingly counter-productive. In the first place, only the military can train other nations' militaries. Secondly, the Department of State (DoS) or any other U.S. government agency would be ill-suited to commanding Department of Defense (DoD) units because of a lack of command structure and a lack of worldwide infrastructure either within the organization itself or in capabilities available to build it.

The U.S. military must always exist because its presence guarantees a free society. As the U.S. Army Chief of Staff warned on Capitol Hill recently, "This is not a time where I can say things are at peace and say 'We don't need an Army.' If you get too small, you lose your ability to compel and deter others from making bad decisions".¹¹

The U.S. military must learn to more efficiently employ existing units and tools like Military Information Support Teams (MISTs), Civil Military Support Elements (CMSEs), a nascent cyber capability, our information operations and public affairs teams, and most importantly, special operations forces (SOF) in an advisory or a building partner capacity role. In conditions that are appropriate in purpose, scope, and scale, the appropriate employment of Regionally Aligned Brigades is also a critical and increasingly urgent task.

To explore the assertions of the thesis, this paper will follow the U.S. State Department's Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF) to explain why non-lethal forces may be more palatable to both the U.S. interagency and its civilian leadership and to explain why the United States' military strategic culture is set for change and why that change must be instituted now.

The Essence of Strategy

As a Harvard business school professor once said, "The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do."¹² The U.S. has consistently won nearly every tactical fight in both Iraq and in Afghanistan, but the strategic win has eluded our militaries in both cases. Looking toward the future, there is still little doubt that our military can win any tactical fight it starts or joins, but such is the insidious nature of insurgency that if any researcher looks at the strategic fight, the long view, he or she would find that the balance sheet is not heavily in the U.S. military's favor. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, an observer of those wars could say they have been many things, but to say that they have been effectively "managed", whether politically, diplomatically, or militarily, is inaccurate.

The American military has always been globally responsive and regionally engaged.¹³ Only recently have our Combatant Commands become integrated with the

interagency however. The military arm of our national power cannot handle world crises alone, and experienced commanders are well aware of the limits of military power. What has been absent from the range of options that is routinely offered up as solution sets, though, are the non-lethal, influence-based force multipliers whose effects are far-reaching and often not obviously traceable back to the United States. In the midst of a fluid world order where the standing of the United States is in question, those kinds of military options are often unexpectedly successful. The United States must choose not to act in its customary way if it wants a winning strategy for the future.

Navigating the Interagency

The State Department habitually uses the ICAF in conjunction with DoD and USAID and sporadically with other U.S. government organizations to identify “key actors, social grievances, and windows of vulnerability” in a studied population.¹⁴ Instead of evaluating traditional conventional military effects, this paper will use the ICAF to highlight the utility of military influence operations with regard to preserving peace.¹⁵ The reason for championing a State Department model to evaluate conflict instead of one from the Defense Department is because the ICAF model more closely identifies with the U.S. military’s civilian leadership. It is important to remember one of the continual complaints of the U.S. interagency regarding senior military officers: that no matter how well-versed a military professional is in regards to his or her specialty, once a commissioned officer reaches the rank of colonel or general, he or she often thinks that his or her expertise should naturally bleed over to the broader aspects of national power. U.S. national leaders as a rule only want military advice from the military. Further, our military leaders must respect their restricted role as it relates to the constitution, as David Barno wrote recently in *The Washington Post*:

Whatever one's opinion of an all-volunteer military or of diminished military experience among civilians, our men and women in uniform must avoid the temptation to expand the military's role in war-making decisions. They advise through their most senior service leaders and, after a decision is made, execute the mission to the best of their ability. For the military to take on a larger role would erode civilian war-making power and, eventually, civilian control of the military. ¹⁶

As a senior policy official with the Council on Foreign Relations further explains, "Even the most politically sophisticated military officers I know are not as good at it as they think they are. Be a straight shooter. That's what you're good at, anyway. Be specific. Be *militarily* detailed."¹⁷

Within the constraints of that advice, which further intimates that a military professional needs to be prepared at all times to give options and frank, precise outcomes of a range of scenarios working from best to worst-case, it would be useful to use the ICAF model to articulate them. The more evident it is to national, political, and interagency leaders that the U.S. military professionals giving them advice are comfortable and familiar with interagency methods, it follows that their advice will likely be even more accepted by those same interagency leaders. It is also perhaps useful to remember the analogy of Eliot Cohen's, which could be applied to any organization outside of the White House, "The [White House] photographer is the worst person in the [White House] because his work is always on display, and it's always positive."¹⁸ His point is that it is easy to take oneself too seriously instead of taking one's job seriously. That kind of egoism is corrupting, and military leaders would do well to remember it. Instead of "living in the bunker", where a leader is insulated by his or her inner ring of advisors who have much to lose and so tend to speak only words their supervisor likes to hear lest they be dislodged from a comfortable coattail, a military leader must look to

the field for answers, tactical realities, and the latest environmental truth and then translate those findings into detailed and complete military advice.¹⁹

Strategic and operational critical thinking and the ability to transmit thoughts logically and unemotionally to civilian leadership are among the most valuable skills that military advisors can possess. One of the stifling truths of true critical thinking, however, is that it rarely gets past the thinking stage either because the thinker is not fortunate enough to be in a position of influence or because he or she is in a position of prestige and comfort not wanting to rock the boat with a new idea or concept. There is never any such thing as the brass ring of a no-risk, high impact option despite Administration wishes. Influence options are as close to that exalted aspiration as the DoD will get, but regrettably, influence operations are always, at their core, strategic in nature and that means they are slow to mature. In today's society, slowly evolving force multiplier results like those achieved by the DoD's influence operators are difficult for an impatient American society to await, but they are almost always effective and rarely detrimental.

It has been so long since Americans have seen the results of a decisive action that except in isolated situations with a lethal force, as in a targeted strike, the time is ripe to try a new method. As the conservative commentator Andrew Bacevich writes, "...to judge by outcomes, the Army is not a force for decisive action. It cannot be counted on to achieve definitive results in a timely manner. In Afghanistan and Iraq, actions that momentarily appeared to be decisive served as preludes to protracted and inconclusive wars."²⁰

Through carefully controlled and bracketed advice and logical, unemotional delivery of consequences for a range of options, military leaders can rebuild our image

both within the American elite and in the political administration. The majority of those options will need to come from less expensive competencies which means America's military leaders will have to heavily rely upon and learn to understand the capabilities of our non-lethal effects specialties.

Method

What is the reason that America has not, at least in the last 13 years, exited a war in an expedient manner? Why is that fact important? It is important because the future appears to be one where total war is not the conflict medium of choice and because the conflicting ideologies and population groups Americans will confront in the future will continue to use the methods of insurgency and terrorism. Insurgency and terrorism will continue to be prevalent because those methods have proven to be cheap and effective for our enemies. What that conclusion means to the future of American military theory is that in order to preserve peace, the old ways of combatting total war have to be recognized for what they are: obsolete.

One of the first steps in the right direction for the U.S. military is to empower and trust the young officers and noncommissioned officers who are on their way up. We have to trust our troops and trust their new, innovative ideas. Youth naturally comes with fearlessness, both the mental and physical variety. The military has always capitalized on the invincible physicality of youth, a sobering reality that is brilliantly explained in Dave Grossman's book *On Killing*. In contrast, the military has always been risk averse to the point of fanaticism when it comes to exploiting the same characteristic in thinking. With thoughtful guidance and strong leadership, our young officers and NCOs can lead us into new territory. Senior military officers have to be willing to reach out to the younger members of the profession, which requires a stalwart humility and a

disposition that is unafraid to take a risk. As then Lt. Gen. John Abrams said in Bosnia nearly two decades ago, "There are going to be junior people who do things that have strategic consequences. If I'm uncomfortable with that, I'd have to engineer the operation so that junior people never do anything. And that's impossible."²¹

It is ghastly to admit the amount of money, power, and young lives that have been wasted during the last 13 years in Iraq and Afghanistan fighting an unconventional enemy. Besides Special Operations Forces, and toward the end of the war the conventional forces they trained, America's fighting forces approached both wars using largely conventional methods, one engagement at a time. It is the wrong approach, as many books and memoirs are now telling the world, "The war in Iraq was a misbegotten venture, begun on bad intelligence and without a vision to guide the soldiers after they destroyed the state. Whatever else we did there, we didn't win."²²

As a result, America's other war fighting units are crowding each other to the trough because they are so ready to be the ones given a chance to try something else. Efforts like the regionally aligned forces (RAF) concept appear to be on the right track, as the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General Raymond Odierno recently, explained the initiative:

We've been spoiled over the years due to the deployments to maturely developed areas of operations. The future will not be that way. We will have to be prepared for regional engagements by aligning [units] with regions in the world and [we] must stay connected. Units will be aligned to regions to become familiar with local and regional concerns and retain a political understanding.²³

What the U.S. military must guard against, however, is the unrealistic and uninformed notion that comes uncomfortably close to believing, or leading our government to believe, that "anybody" can be a special operator.

Military members who have served with SOF know that the training, mindset, values, and makeup of our special operators are unique, and while we may need more of them, it is not a quick fix when we do. One of the most important SOF truths is that special operations forces cannot be mass-produced. This is a reality that has been borne out over countless years and rotational SOF deployments. Experience and maturity take time.

Conventional operators who have seen both theaters of war in the last decade-plus realize the difference between our special operations and conventional assets and the fact that creating a special operator is a long process, as in the case of Civil Affairs (C.A.): “It is impossible to just ‘create’ Civil Affairs specialties. The specialties are such that once they are gone they’re gone. It’s easy to grow infantry – not so with C.A.”²⁴ The integration of the two schools of thought is crucial because both have discrete uses, and both are essential. As Odierno expressed recently, “The U.S. military must continue to improve Special Operations – Conventional Forces’ interdependence and integration in pursuit of a Prevent-Shape-Win strategy.”²⁵ Both sides of the U.S. military can “win”, but if observers are truly being honest, America’s military influence operations are the best option to tackle the Phase Zero tasks of “prevent” and “shape”, to say nothing of the absolutely critical special operations mission of operating in the newly accepted concept of the “human domain”.

The hand-wringing in the halls of the Pentagon about the perils the U.S. will face as a result of having a smaller Army is perhaps justified, but it is not helpful, and a war-weary public will soon tire of it. The question our military leadership should be asking is, “Are we looking beyond the wretched immediate to what we could be if we change the

way we think?” Some leaders are, “...Commanders say the Army’s future lies in creating leaner, faster units that can provide disaster relief, secure embassies, seize airfields and deploy for other emergencies large and small — all while continuing to deter potential adversaries from aggressive actions.”²⁶

And so are some military critics:

The issue, therefore, is how to have not the most powerful military today but rather the most relevant military at the point of necessity — a point that cannot be known. To have that, the United States needs a military that is not necessarily “ready for combat” at any given moment but instead is most able to adapt to the events of tomorrow.²⁷

A Method Untapped

One of the most obvious alienated portions of both Iraqi and, to a greater extent because of its inferior education infrastructure, Afghan society also comprises half of it: women. How is the U.S. military reaching that demographic? Is America actually using her military population to greatest effect? The time for action in Iraq has eluded the U.S. military, but for the rest of the time American forces are in Afghanistan and for future conflicts, it behooves the U.S. military leadership to open their arms wide and bring in the multi-faceted capabilities of a female warfighter. As U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Julie Nethercot articulated recently:

Gone are the days of the clearly-delineated front line or the Rear Support Area, now we deal with distributed operations that come with counterinsurgencies, where the lines are fuzzy and vague at best, where the small forward operating bases are the best way to influence the security of a local village. This dynamic requires us to be flexible in thought and action in order to be successful. The old linear paradigms fall by the wayside when you’re engaging and engendering a [local] population while dealing with a kinetic enemy.²⁸

Though provocatively stated, Nethercot is not alone in her thinking, nor is her thinking a novel concept. The writing was on the wall 40 years ago when Robert Hill

was a West Point plebe, but the U.S. military has yet to heed the words his father said to him as related in this remembrance:

I was a cadet at West Point when the first class with women entered in 1976 and ambivalent about their admittance into the Corps of Cadets. I remember asking my father, an alumnus and career infantry officer who saw combat in Greece, Korea, and Vietnam, how he felt. He surprised me with his response: future wars would demand more brain than brawn and women were damned smart. It would be foolish to limit the military's intellectual capital because of outdated stereotypes and prejudices.²⁹

Women are currently serving in every one of the Influence Operations branches with distinction. Besides civil affairs, information operations, public affairs, military information support operations, and cyber warfare, women also serve various roles within our biggest peace-preserving tool, special operations. Their employment in SOF, however, still requires pressure. Recently, a senior leader in special operations answered a question in a group setting on the utility of the Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in Afghanistan, and in the fashion of a bizarre, stream-of-consciousness verbal musing, he mentioned the possibility of a special operations "Amazon Brigade" that would be comprised of females-only, separated from their brothers.³⁰ The collective and dismayed gasp of the assembled female senior leaders in the audience speaks to the still very uninformed and out-of-touch leadership culture the military still faces.

Applying the ICAF Model

The first step in the ICAF is to "Evaluate the Context of the Conflict". Step two delves essentially into the same task but in more detail, "Understand Core Grievances and Social/Institutional Resilience". Step three goes deeper still, "Identify Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors", and finally, step four gets to the possible solutions, "Describe Opportunities for Increasing or Decreasing Conflict".³¹ Describing the fourth

step another way is to say, “Winning without going to conflict, and therefore, not sacrificing American lives and expending our most important national treasure”.

Influence Operators are inherently familiar with ICAF’s step one. Special Operators perpetually practice it even when they are in the midst of the latter three, and practitioners of cyber warfare increasingly are the reason we have the information to study. The non-lethal effects practitioner must study the conflict and deepen his or her regional understanding, usually in concert with interagency partners before even entering the milieu. The best public affairs practitioners deployed overseas, for example, will always run their messaging campaign by the American Embassy in their host nation. Civil Affairs elements are in the habit of working all of their projects through the embassy as well, and afterward with the militaries of the host nation. Projects and relationships like these are the reason our non-lethals are more in touch with the local population than a large American troop presence locked up on a forward operating base. Civil Affairs teams can gain access to terrain with the same effectiveness of an infantry battalion but with a more benign effect, smaller footprint, and far less media attention.

The needed architecture is not far from the current concept. Approximately four years ago, the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) formed the Global SOF Network, an architecture comprised of Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs), various forward-deployed Special Operations Command – Forward (SOC-FWD) elements, and Special Operations Liaison Officers (SOLOs) designed to act as strategic sensors to gain overarching understanding of specific, named environments and to anticipate conflict. Conventional Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) established

similar networks in the form of Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATFs) composed of U.S. interagency actors and who meet once a week or more to discuss issues in their Area of Responsibility. Combatant Commanders also rely on their resident State Department expert, an ambassadorial post called the Political Advisor. Senior Foreign Service officers are now routinely assigned to the Combatant Command's sub-unified TSOCs as special advisors to the TSOC Commander. The seeds of change with regard to a more integrated government solution set are growing; the future can only get better.

In step two, influence operators are still shaping, still researching. They make it their business to find the disaffected and dissatisfied societal groups who are like “dry gunpowder waiting to explode”.³² Military Information Support Teams (MISTs) are exceedingly effective at this step. For example, in early 2014's crisis in Crimea, a valuable flexible response option for the U.S. military's contribution to the solution could have been a MIST team to assist the U.S. Embassy Kyiv's messaging. Through the U.S. Embassy's Public Diplomacy team, the MIST could have assisted the Ukrainian government's communications efforts. The MISTs are invaluable to a public diplomacy team, using indigenous assets to produce culturally sensitive, environmentally relevant messages.³³

The ICAF's step three is to “Identify Drivers of Conflict and Mitigating Factors”. In the case of Afghanistan, military leaders are circumspect about withdrawing Americans at the end of 2014, and for good reason. The world has watched Iraq descend into violence again, and many in America believe that the same fate awaits Afghanistan once American troops are gone. A residual force in Afghanistan, one that can “continue crucial military institution building and a counterterrorism mission there”, would be able

to carry out stability and security missions as well as maintain the shaping operation in conjunction with the host nation forces and with the cooperation of the U.S. interagency.³⁴ It is possible that leaving a small force in Iraq would have done the same thing, and would have given the Iraqi government confidence to reach out to and represent all portions of the Iraqi population.³⁵

In step four, “Describe Opportunities for Increasing or Decreasing Conflict”, the military advisor to civilian leadership has to be brutally honest about how much the various options will cost both in terms of money and personnel. Non-lethals are cheaper than most ground troops but will still cost money if they are to be truly utilized and their products made effective. Although it is wise and useful to use a framework like ICAF, it is important to remain free from idealistic thinking. Historically, military officers are more firmly rooted in the realist camp, and that is why the unflinchingly and “humorless” military tends to get a bad rap, as related by Frank Hoffman, a senior research fellow at the National Defense University:

Of course, some colleagues will accuse me of being a ‘fear mongerer.’ They could claim that...I am overly invested in threat perceptions that produce the bloated Pentagon budget. At a recent conference at [the Cato Institute, Washington, DC] one academic railed against ‘the pathological beliefs’ and vested interests of Pentagon leaders who find the future complex and daunting. Given my agreement with these Pentagon leaders, I will have to plead guilty, but not to any pathological devotion to high spending — just to a realistic and historically grounded conception of national security freed from the blinders of academic ideology.³⁶

Step four is also where our military influencers can develop plans of action to directly affect the security environment, build trust among the host nation forces, and work to identify the specific characteristics of logistics and infrastructure that will be crucial in developing future relationships. Influence operations forces and special

operations forces routinely gain access through the use of episodic rotational forces, multilateral and bilateral exercises, military-to-military engagements, and coalition training. Scalable non-lethal effects find greater purchase as extensions of country teams rather than the core of a military task force, and this quality is readily acceptable and appreciated in the U.S. interagency. The distributed nature of non-lethal effects, localized and customized for the human terrain and geography yet maintaining an overarching strategic approach to their use in shaping future conflict to a time and place of our choosing, is in essence being able to “see first, understand first, act first, [and] finish decisively”.³⁷

Conclusion

The employment of the military’s combat strike forces is unflinching evidence that we, as Americans, have failed in every other aspect of the national power construct. We need to preserve peace in the future if at all possible.

As has been said multiple ways in this paper, Americans are tired of war. There is a ever-widening chasm between America’s two major political parties, and there is too much time being spent on social issues that are divisive and polarizing but ultimately far less important than America’s international standing and her domestic economy. No matter what, America’s youth is tired of the Great Divide and wishes to work toward what is important; a strong U.S. starts with a strong economy.³⁸ America needs to save money, not spend it on expensive conflicts.

The ancient theorist Sun Tzu repeatedly emphasizes the importance of “other means” to subdue an enemy. In the worthwhile global aim of preserving peace, the U.S. military has to look beyond its own might and accept that its current widely used

methods are not the only ones. Two decades ago, historian John Keegan put it this way:

I'm a tremendous admirer of the U.S. Army. I think it's a magnificent, war-winning machine, but however good an institution is, it also has its faults. And the fault of the U.S. Army is that it's very, very doctrine-minded. They go to West Point and they're taught the rules there. And then they go to Command and General Staff College and they're taught the rules there. And they go to the Army War College and they're taught the rules there. So, not surprisingly, they approach situations very much in terms of the rules they've been taught.³⁹

The contributing factors and global conditions that existed before September 11, 2001 are gone, never to return. America's concept of leadership must change to allow for capable allies who can assist the U.S. and contribute to a lasting global or, at least, regional peace. Assisting our allies, as they assist us, in maintaining some semblance of world order should be the focus of U.S. strategic culture and our objective – not a wide, sweeping goal of an American style of democracy across all latitudes.

The U.S. military will see more counterinsurgency in its future despite our desire to close the chapter on it, and the U.S. will face terrorism repeatedly. As such, we must ensure our efforts are focused on countering terrorism as well as countering insurgencies. What is more, the current U.S. Administration's "Pacific Pivot", while addressing important issues in the Pacific, will not make the arc of instability in the Middle East go away, so despite timelines and redlines, the enemy will remain, lurking ominously. There is a Sunni-Shi'a fight brewing endlessly; it is a constant but unpredictable rhythm of rhetoric that paints the U.S. as The Far Enemy, The Great Satan. This means that U.S. people and interests will always be in danger abroad and at home. Incidents like Benghazi have caused the U.S. military to pin down its lethal response forces leaving them nothing but rigid options to achieve effects in a Phase

Zero environment. The U.S. cannot avoid that fight without detrimental consequences to its national interests. While coming off of war footing is a noble and idealistic endeavor, the pragmatists recognize that most of the time the enemy chooses when and where to fight. Ultimately, instability in the Middle East means closer support bases for attacks in Europe and eventually in our homeland.

To survive, then, the U.S. must adapt instead of trying to conquer by entering into more wars mismanaged by an “intellectually sclerotic and unimaginative senior officer corps”.⁴⁰ America must preserve the peace that will allow her to avoid more wars that exact huge penalties without yielding promised outcomes.⁴¹ Finally, the U.S. military must address current issues without continuing to humor political leadership that wants a range of options that offer full impact with no risk. The way forward is with influence operations, our highly trained and experienced special operators, the integration of our conventional COIN-trained forces, and our non-lethal effects-based capabilities.

Our non-lethal effects forces rely on the idea of “shaping before conflict” and they do so in the most cost-effective way. They are efficient, sustainable, and arguably more acceptable to a nation and interagency that has been at war for the last 13 years. They are able to fully employ our force and are not gender-dependent; their abilities are enhanced due to their gender diversity. Many have habitual longstanding relationships with our embassies, with the U.S. Agency for International Development, with our foreign allies, and with many other nongovernmental organizations that welcome the assistance from experienced and mature military forces that provide their niche skills without the “ignorance and arrogance” naïve and untrained troops can sometimes exhibit.

In the end, the most important aspect of non-lethal forces is their ability to diffuse a situation before it becomes a crisis. In the case of the non-lethals that employ female troops, their power to diffuse is exponentially increased because of the ability to reach the female indigenous population. Non-lethal forces' realm is in Phase Zero activities; the coin of that realm is relationships. A widely-known adage is that "it is easier to say 'no' to a stranger than to a friend", and the U.S. military needs to be in the business of making friends at this point in history. America would do well to remember the words of the director of the U.S. Military History Institute who said, "The situation has changed, but the process to come up with a solution has not".⁴² Effective solutions come from research, experience, and courage. Very rarely are those qualities found in one person or in one leader. As the former Indian Deputy Military Advisor in London, Lt. Gen. Arjun Ray, said simply, "Military power is not a sum total of guns, tanks, aircraft, frigates and nuclear bombs. Rather, the armed forces derive their strength from the people".⁴³

Taken one step further, Arjun Ray's comment rings true both inside and outside of the military. Obviously, the U.S. military must make a connection with the enemy's center of gravity, the people. It must also make a sound connection with two populations of its own: the American citizens who count on it for their protection, and the very crux of its formations, the American warfighter. A strong military is essential despite what the doves would say, and a strong military must be used with extreme caution despite what the hawks would say. There is no doubt that the U.S. military must maintain its unparalleled ability to dispense conventional lethal action. There is also no doubt that the U.S. military must maintain a strategic reserve of both personnel and equipment capability for a lethal eventuality. What is at stake is when to use them.

A common strategic voice is essential if Americans want to count on their military's influence operations. The narrative has to be that Sun Tzu's "war by other means" really means no war at all, and preserving peace is only achieved by vigorously shaping the environment to attain that goal. Sometimes a wide paintbrush is necessary to paint a wall; very rarely does one need an aggressive roller or wide-reaching sprayer. Current times require a watercolor brush, and though it takes longer and will require different skills, the paint will still ultimately find purchase.

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