Strategy Research Project

GLOBAL INSURGENCY: A PRESCRIPTION FOR IMPOSING STRATEGIC PARALYSIS

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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The United States has been engaged in a Global War on Terrorism since September 2001. After over six years of national effort – which has included the loss of nearly 4,000 service members in combat operations, as well as the expenditure of over 500 billion dollars of national wealth – many questions have been raised regarding our nation's strategy to counter a threat based on a radical revolutionary religious ideology. Some argue that this threat constitutes a global insurgency. This Strategy Research Project examines the nature of this twenty-first century threat and it analyzes the option of "strategic paralysis" to counter the threat. This analysis begins with consideration of the global insurgency as a "system of systems." It continues with discussion of its cultural, ideological and political ideals and its strategic ends, ways, and means. This SRP then describes the U.S. conception of the global insurgent threat and the ends, ways and means of the current U.S. strategy for combating it. Finally, this paper will propose a strategic adaptation of John Warden's "Five Rings" Model as an instrument to

identify critical threat nodes and utilize appropriate instruments of national power to impose “strategic paralysis” on the insurgent enemy.

GLOBAL INSURGENCY:
A PRESCRIPTION FOR IMPOSING STRATEGIC PARALYSIS

The end of the Cold War left a unipolar world in which the United States is the sole remaining superpower. And, some might contend, paradoxically, the end of the Cold War also opened the door for an explosion of terrorism on a global scale. Although insurgent warfare has festered around for centuries, the expansion of globalization has enabled groups such as Al Qaeda to use terror tactics to attack vital U.S. national interests. To secure its interests against these threats, the United States must use decisive force and a systems approach, similar to what Col John A. Warden's strategic Instant Thunder campaign in support of Operation Desert Storm in 1991. This SRP will describe the most prominent current threats to U.S. national interests and the role of globalization in these threats. Next, it discusses key cultural, political, and ideological factors contributing to the insurgents' activities, as well as their strategic ends, ways, and means. The SRP then briefly summarizes the current U.S. strategy to counter the global insurgent threat. It continues with an examination of Warden's theory of strategic paralysis and Joe Strange's center of gravity analysis. It then recommends adapting Warden's model to strategically optimize the "decisive" integrated use of all instruments of power (IOPs) available to the United States and its friends, allies, and partners. These optimally integrated instruments of power can then be used to strike a "decisive" blow at the enemy's system of systems, rather than repeatedly delivering "indecisive" blows that have only temporary effects which the enemy can readily overcome. The SRP concludes with a discussion of what strategic "success" will look like. There are hundreds of terrorist groups and organizations in the world with varying agendas. But,

for the purposes of this paper, in reference to the current perpetrators of terrorist acts against U.S. interests, the terms “global insurgents” and “violent extremists” will be used interchangeably.

Setting the Stage: The Nature and Conduct of Twenty-First Century Warfare

We need look no further than Iraq and Afghanistan for an insight into future conflicts. No country on the planet can stand toe-to-toe with the U.S. on a conventional battlefield. So, twenty-first century warfare will be dominated by non-state actors and, to a lesser extent, by state actors, who exploit the asymmetry of insurgency to challenge our vital interests. A man of his times, Clausewitz viewed war in terms of state-on-state battles, but today’s wars do not necessarily conform to the Clausewitzian model. In the current Global War on Terror, the United States is waging war against insurgents, many without state sponsorship. These unconventional foes are fighting for political, cultural, and most significantly, ideological goals. This insurgent threat is transnational and much more difficult to find, fix, track, target, and destroy than the forces of traditional state actors. Because they are more difficult to engage and destroy, unlike nation-states, insurgents are able to rely heavily on persistence, which arguably poses an asymmetric threat to U.S. national will. The term “persistent conflict” has recently been coined to describe a key capability of these foes. Their persistence enables them to continuously adapt and even to expand; indeed, they do not appear to be going away any time soon. The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* describes this persistent threat as a “transnational terrorist movement fueled by a violent ideology of hatred, oppression, and murder.”[1]

One of the major new factors influencing the nature of twenty-first century warfare is globalization. Taking full advantage of expanding globalization, insurgents have acquired the ability to influence recruits, to acquire capital to finance operations, and to incite anti-American sentiment among the global "network" of Muslim extremists, as well as more moderate Muslims. They are also able to operate as a "flatter," less hierarchal, organization through small cells. They maintain anonymity through their use of new and evolving global communication technology, such as worldwide cell phones, wire-free high-speed internet access available via satellite, and other security-enabled electronic devices. This flexible and readily available communication capability makes tracking terrorist activities extremely difficult and enables them to plan operations with little risk of detection as they perpetrate faceless acts of violence against states and their innocent populations.[2] Technological advances have also compressed time and space and thus created a much smaller world, making it necessary for nation-states to compete in the global market if they are going to survive.

The necessity for states to compete in this global market has forced them to open up their borders and economies, ceding considerable sovereignty in the process. This has resulted in changed conceptions of traditional national security practices, such as border security, thereby opening the door for transnational threats to enter without detection.[3] Globalization has also forced previously wary countries to cooperate with one another because of shared economic and commercial interests, often at the expense of traditional national and international security considerations. In this evolving transnational economic and security landscape, many states may be unwilling to subordinate their economic interests in a particular region in order to assist traditional

allies in the fight against violent extremism. U.S. policy calls for terminating economic interchanges with states that sponsor terrorism, with the objective to coerce such countries to modify their behavior by means of economic pressure. Yet some of our oldest allies seemingly justify continued economic relations with Iran despite its open sponsorship of terrorist organizations and its on-going development of a nuclear capability in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions.[4] Finally, globalization has complicated efforts to track known or suspected terrorists because their ready access to information and personal data makes identity theft much easier. In the past, Islamist terrorists have readily obtained fraudulent identification – such as passports – claimed nationality in various countries, and used their bogus passports to enter the U.S.[5]

The nature of the war that the U.S. is waging against this twenty-first century threat is much different than that which would be waged against a conventional threat, particularly in its likely duration and in specifying its termination or even its victory. Because of the driving forces behind why and how the enemy is fighting and the ends, ways, and means he is using, this global engagement against violent extremists has been called by many the “long war.” But some critics of U.S. policy quickly point out that the U.S. strategic culture will not sustain support for a protracted war. Our current enemy recognizes this “seam” in our democratic society; this enemy will exploit our nation’s apparent unwillingness to prosecute a protracted, inchoate conflict. They will attempt to offset our superior military strength with asymmetric attacks, persistently driving up the costs in blood and treasure for America. American public and political support for the war effort will wane because the psychological implications of the “long

war" send the message of indeterminate sacrifice in blood and treasure. As Lt Col Phillip Skuta, USMC, stated, "The strategic cards must be played in such a manner as to win the game, not just the hand. In the eyes of this insurgent threat, this [U.S.] cultural tendency to favor a near-term strategic perspective represents an opportunity which can be exploited in a 'long war' to win the strategic game."[6]

The Driving Forces Behind the Current Threat: Cultural, Political, and Ideological

In the Global War on Terror, the U.S. and its allies are facing an enemy who indiscriminately attacks and kills innocent civilians almost every day. These violent extremists are not fighting a "just war" in the Westphalian State tradition. Rather, they employ violence for extreme cultural, political, and ideological goals. They impose no limits on the ways to achieve their desired end state: the establishment of Sharia Law in the Muslim world; the ejection of all Western influence and moderate/apostate governments from the Middle East; and the destruction of Israel. Extremist organizations like Al Qaeda have legitimized their violent actions through their distortion of the traditional values and beliefs of Islam. They have misconstrued Muslim ideology to recruit followers and convince them that their traditional value system is under attack from Western culture and from moderate Muslims perversely influenced by Western societies.[7] Religion is arguably the strongest cultural bond among Muslims. Islam is so instrumental in Muslim culture that it has the strength to bring together those searching for identity. Radicalized by a small group of zealots, adherents may be willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause. Fear of cultural extinction fuels extremists' commitment to eliminate those responsible for the supposed erosion of values.[8]

Along with culture, politics also motivates violent extremists. Terrorism, is widely defined as "violence or the threat of violence used to achieve political goals."[9] Al Qaeda indeed specifies its political objectives: to overthrow moderate Muslim regimes for not practicing a radical form of Sharia Law; to force the U.S. to leave the Middle East; and to destroy Israel. Al Qaeda is dedicated to establish an isolated and powerful Islamic world; Al Qaeda militants have taken up arms in a global insurgency focused against Western culture to achieve that end. They intend to strike blows against the U.S. and its interests in the Middle East to effect a policy change and a U.S. withdrawal.[10] Al-Zarqawi, a member of Al Qaeda, expressed his political goals to Osama bin Laden in a 2004 situation report:

> They, i.e., the Shi`a, have declared a secret war against the people of Islam. They are the proximate, dangerous enemy of the Sunnis, even if the Americans are also an archenemy. The danger from the Shi`a, however, is greater and their damage is worse and more destructive to the [Islamic] nation than the Americans, on whom you find a quasi-consensus about killing them as an assailing enemy.[11]

To achieve their geopolitical goals of driving the U.S. out of the Middle East and ending moderate Islamic rule, Al Qaeda seeks to establish a caliphate which would establish strict Sunni rule and repress or convert the Shi`a and other Islamic sects in the Muslim world. In order to gain the public and popular support that the organization will need to survive, Al Qaeda must also establish a representative form of government. Al Qaeda leadership acknowledges this requirement.[12]

Although cultural and political factors motivate the global insurgents, the most prominent incentive in their indiscriminant application of violence is an extreme ideology derived from a corruption of the Islamic religion. *The Al-Qaeda Training Manual* lists the word "sacrifice" as a necessary qualification and character trait for organization

members. According to the Manual, "He [the member] has to be willing to do the work and undergo martyrdom for the purpose of achieving the goal and establishing the religion of majestic Allah on earth."[13] Violent extremists place no limits on their ways of reaching their dual objectives of destroying Western influence in their world – particularly the U.S. – and of eliminating the nation of Israel. They proclaim these objectives in the name of Islam, which makes them even more dangerous. Without question, the potential for the greatest terrorist catastrophe resides in their acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Indeed some terrorists groups which have admitted they would use WMD to target innocent populations. The international constraints which previously limited access to WMD have diminished significantly, and the extreme ideology and irrational decision-making of global insurgents makes them more likely to use WMD than other – more rational – non-state actors.[14]

The Ends, Ways, and Means of Violent Extremists

Today's adversary is an adaptive and dynamic opponent who operates within a diverse, interconnected, and complex operational environment. In order to fully understand the strategy of these global insurgents, it is important to understand their conception of the correlation between the strategic ends, ways and means they employ. The violent extremists' "ends" require the establishment of Sharia Law in a Muslim world where governance and rule of law is enforced by a radical interpretation of the *Holy Koran*. Secondly, their endstate postulates a Middle East expunged of all "occupiers" and apostate Muslim governments friendly to the West. Finally, this endstate includes removal of all Jews from Jerusalem and the ultimate destruction of Israel.

Global insurgents use multiple “ways” to accomplish their ends and satisfy their objectives. Most dramatically, they resort to the use of asymmetric warfare to elevate terrorism from the level of a tactic to that of a strategy. Exploiting the compression of time and space caused by the Information Technology Revolution, they use tactical actions such as suicide bombings, kidnapping, torture, and beheadings to achieve strategic-level effects through media attention and by creating widespread fear in targeted populations. Because today’s enemy is executing an extremist ideology, there are no limits on his ways of waging the war. This enemy will use WMD to kill masses of people if he believes this slaughter will further his ideological cause. One of the critical requirements necessary to keep the terrorist “machine” in operation is an abundant source of willing recruits to engage in battle against the apostates. While these recruits can be considered a means to the end, the distortion of Islam and accompanying training and indoctrination on jihad, such as the various training manuals and terrorist training camps, are examples of the ways global insurgents develop their means to achieve their ends. Thus, highly indoctrinated and motivated (brain-washed?) Muslim terrorist combatants attack the U.S. and our allies around the globe, killing innocent civilians to instill fear and to coerce states to withdraw support for the Global War on Terrorism and to submit to the violent extremists’ religious, political, and ideological ends. Finally, because politics and religion are so closely aligned in the Muslim world, these violent extremists have distorted the fundamentals of Islam to promote their own extreme ideology. They use virulent strategic communication to unify all Muslims around the world to create an Islamic Caliphate to purify Muslim society of corruption and apostasy.[15]

Global insurgents have varied sources of power. Certainly, the most prominent of these sources is state sponsorship of international terrorism. The U.S. State Department has identified five states as state sponsors of terrorism: Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea, and Cuba. These states have provided financial assistance, weapons, safe havens, and other support for global insurgents to conduct acts of terror.[16] According to Rachel Ehrenfeld, Director of the American Center for Democracy, terrorists also generate money from criminal activities such as extortion, prostitution rings, video pirating, and drug trafficking. Drug trafficking alone is a $2 trillion per year enterprise; and because terrorist groups are becoming more and more independent actors, they are capitalizing on it as a source of funding.[17] As mentioned earlier, globalization has enabled the free flow of money and people across borders, making it much easier for terrorists to access capital and stay connected with their sources, regardless of where they are located in the global market. Finally, recruits are a vital means for sustaining the global insurgency. They are the ones who carry the torch of radical, fundamental Islam; they form the sub-national groups and cells which carry out the means to satisfy the ends.

This review of the ends, ways, and means of violent extremists warrants consideration of the insurgency as a system. The world is becoming flatter due to globalization; so too are violent extremist groups, such as Al Qaeda, operating more horizontally than vertically. However, this enemy is still part of a larger system. This system has definable layers. It is comprised of a radical ideology at its core; it is led by charismatic leaders; it maintains several sources of funding; it recruits oppressed and misinformed populations; and it has cells which execute its operations and support its

strategic mission. Interconnectedness within this system enables it to conduct violent acts of terror while promoting its ideology. However, this interconnectedness also creates vulnerabilities and "seams" in the system which the U.S. and its allies can exploit to achieve victory in the GWOT.

Current U.S. Strategy for the "Persistent Conflict"

As the U.S. prosecutes twenty-first century "wars," we must stay focused on the desired end-state. The ultimate objective of the current global insurgency should be a "better state of peace," as B. H. Liddell Hart coined.[18] So, political and military leaders must remember to consider the ends while determining the ways and means. This is the only way to achieve the desired peace. As far as the U.S. ends in prosecuting this War on Terrorism, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* cites a "two-pronged vision" to win the War on Terror.[19] In the short term, the goal is to defeat violent extremist groups which have threatened our way of life by taking away societal freedoms. The long-term goal is to create a global environment where it is impossible for violent extremists to organize and gain support.[20] The U.S. intends to use all of its ways and means, along with those of its coalition partners, to defeat this global insurgency.

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* lists multiple ways of achieving the ends identified above:

Prevent attacks by terrorist networks.

Deny weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorists and rogue states.

Deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states.

Deny terrorists control of any nation.

Advance effective democracy.

Create coalitions and partnerships throughout the world.

Build U.S. counterterrorism infrastructure and capabilities.[21]

Similar to the ends, the ways listed above can be broken down into short-term and long-term approaches. The first four are the short-term ways which seek to resolve the immediate problem of violent extremism as a threat to our way of life.[22] To accomplish these near-term tasks, the U.S. strategy calls for using all instruments of power – both kinetic and non-kinetic – to strike directly at terrorists in order to deny their ability to conduct operations, to deny their access WMD and sources of funding, to eliminate their hiding places, and to defend our national interests.[23] While these short-term concepts are limited in scope and tend to focus on the immediate problem, the last three ways support a long-term U.S. strategy. Indeed the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* defines the GWOT as a "long war"[24]; therefore the strategy identifies four approaches to achieve long-term success. First of all, it is necessary to establish and maintain international standards of accountability. In essence, this means that all states have an obligation in the fight against terrorism. They must actively engage in the efforts to deny, deter, detect, and prevent terrorist activities. Secondly, coalitions and partnerships must be strengthened for viable long-term success. International cooperation is the key. Next, the strategy calls for enhancing U.S. government architecture and interagency cooperation in an effort to integrate all federal agencies in the fight against terrorism. Finally, the long-term problem of winning the war of ideas and advancing democracy requires us to commit intellectual and human capital to the task of defeating the terrorists. Essentially, this involves educating and training experts

to work in the field of counter-terrorism.[25] These long-term ways support an endstate in which the world is a safer place. Ideally, these ways will enable us to win the battle of ideas and create "a global environment inhospitable to violent extremists and all who support them."[26]

Since 2001, Congress has authorized over $500 billion for the fight against terrorism, not including funds appropriated in fiscal year 2008.[27] But winning the GWOT will take more than lavish funding. According to the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,* the means available to the U.S. to conduct its strategy for combating violent extremists reside in the full spectrum of national power. Diplomatically, the strategy calls for working with our partners and coalition nations to fight the Global War on Terrorism and stop proliferation of WMD. Informationally, a key part of U.S. strategy is to get the right message out by persuading responsible Islamic leaders to denounce the radical ideology which justifies killing innocent people. Militarily, the strategy requires direct attacks against violent extremist groups to eliminate their ability to operate, as well as taking a strong stand against state sponsorship of terrorism – for which regime change is an option. Lastly, disrupting the flow of resources and ending state sponsorship of terrorism is a high economic priority in the current U.S. strategy.[28] This list of means is not inclusive; it only touches the tip of the spear regarding U.S. IOPs described in the current national strategy. However, by applying the ways listed above to win the GWOT, the U.S. seeks to achieve the ends of winning the War on Terror.

The Enemy as a System

Regardless of the type of war in which the U.S. finds itself, our leaders must use all the IOP's decisively and systematically to deal with the threat. Colonel John

Warden, a contemporary airpower theorist, developed a systems approach by means of which to engage an enemy in parallel attacks, across multiple spectrums, in order to induce strategic paralysis, making it ultimately impossible for the enemy to oppose the attack. As we attack the enemy system, the parts we strike, and the sequence or simultaneity with which we strike them, are determined by our overall objectives, by the enemy's ability to resist, and by how much physical, moral, and political effort we are willing to exert.[29] Warden broke the enemy system into five rings; he designated the center ring, leadership, as the most crucial – as the center of gravity. This ring is what essentially controls the rest of the system and provides direction and leadership to the organization. Moving out, the next ring includes organic essentials. This ring contains the "must haves," on which the organization's survival depends. Examples for a nation-state would be refineries and electric production facilities. The third ring includes infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, railways, airfields, and similar systems. This ring facilitates organizational movement and supply distribution. The fourth ring includes the population, the state's people, who can exert pressure on the leadership to continue fighting or sue for peace. The fifth and final ring includes the fielded forces or military. It surrounds the other four rings to protect the system from enemy intrusions (defensive) or to attack the enemy system first with its fielded forces (offensive).[30]

Figure 1. Warden's Five Rings Model Source: Col John A Warden III, "The Enemy as a System," *Air Power Journal*, (Spring 1995), p. 48[31]

Warden viewed each of these rings as critical for the enemy system's survival. Parallel attacks across all the rings would cause the leadership to break down and induce strategic paralysis. He also created an equation for prosecuting war: the physical times the morale equals the outcome. For example, if you virtually destroy the physical element in the enemy system, then the highest morale in the world will not yield a favorable outcome for the enemy – because the nearer either factor approaches zero, the less likely the enemy can survive.[32]

Similar to Warden's systems approach, Dr. Joe Strange, an expert in enemy systems, developed a center of gravity methodology called the CG-CC-CR-CV model. He defines a center of gravity (CG) as "primary sources of moral or physical strength, power and resistance." Importantly, however, Strange notes that the CG is dependent upon certain functions for support. He places these functions into three categories: "Critical capabilities" (CC), which are "primary abilities which merit a Center of Gravity to be identified as such in the context of a given scenario, situation, or mission"; "Critical requirements" (CR), which are "essential conditions, resources and means for a critical capability to be fully operative"; and "Critical vulnerabilities" (CV), which are revealed when certain CRs are dissected, thereby leaving them "deficient or vulnerable to neutralization, interdiction, or attack."[33] Strange's model enables us to create an architecture to analyze the enemy as a system-of-systems and ultimately strike at his center of gravity by decisively attacking his CVs. Warden designated these CVs as "critical nodes," but regardless of what term is used, they are critical parts of a strategic analysis. Because these vulnerabilities are critical, successful exploitation of one or more of them will trigger a reaction back up through the CR-CC-CG chain that results in

neutralizing the CG. Thus, CVs reveal "seams" that should be exploited in order to enervate an enemy center of gravity.[34] If these vulnerabilities are attacked with the appropriate amount of force and at the "right" time and place, it is possible to paralyze the enemy system and defeat the threat.

Recommendation: Adapting the "Five Rings" Model to Combat Violent Extremism

Warden's systems approach worked very well during Desert Storm. With proper political direction it can work against twenty-first century global insurgent threats. The strategic goal is to paralyze the enemy through decisive use of all national instruments of power. To succeed in this fight against radical extremism, we must sustain the pressure on the enemy, using any or all instruments of power. During the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, Secretary Rumsfeld insisted on approving all sensitive targets, such as infrastructure and those associated with Taliban leadership, due to the "political implications" of those targets. From the very first night of attacks, we did not engage many targets of opportunity because of an excruciatingly slow target approval process.[35] As mentioned earlier, the effects of globalization – which facilitates the free flow of people, capital, information, and security – have made coordinated attacks on insurgents' critical vulnerabilities difficult enough. Delays in attacking validated targets only give the enemy time to maneuver, so we lose the element of surprise and tend to prolong the conflict. Despite the merit of Sun Tzu's assertion that the acme of all material skill is to subdue an enemy without fighting, there are times when shock and awe are necessary.[36] Warden's Five Rings strategy breaks the enemy into systems and subsystems in order to attack in parallel throughout the system so objectives are

met with the least amount of effort and in the least amount of time, thereby inducing strategic paralysis.[37]

In "Warden and the Air Corps Tactical School," Maj Howard Belote, USAF, suggests Warden's formula for war is flawed and will not work because it discounts the morale of irrational state and non-state actors.[38] However, insurgent groups, like state actors, have centers of gravity and can succumb to strategic paralysis if decisively attacked, despite exceptionally high morale. The U.S. success against the Taliban in Afghanistan provides a good example. In no way does the systems approach boil down to simply finding and killing terrorists. It is critical that the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy not only integrates but also synchronizes all instruments of national power. We must address targets both kinetically and non-kinetically. Our strategy must carefully and thoroughly consider all ends, ways, and means for dealing with global insurgents. Consider the following adaptation of Warden's "Five Rings Model"; it shows how Al-Qaeda fits into the model and how it could be paralyzed by decisive parallel attacks across all its rings to neutralize the center of gravity. This adaptation could be employed against any violent extremist group.

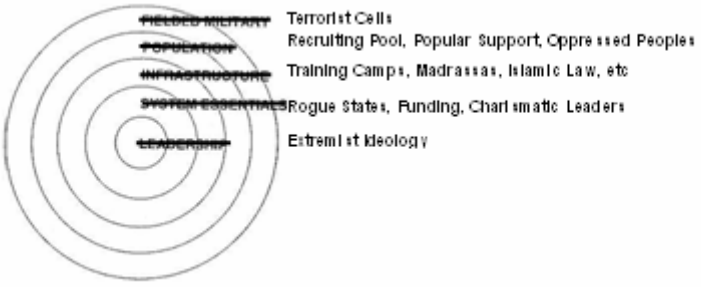

Figure 2: Five Rings Applied To Insurgent Threats Like Al Qaeda Source: Adapted from Col John A Warden III, "The Enemy as a System," *Air Power Journal*, (Spring 1995), p. 48[39]

Violent extremists are an adaptive and dynamic foe; therefore, the ends, ways and means of U.S. strategy must be constantly reviewed to ensure we are attacking the right center of gravity and that we are on track to defeat the threat. We should attack across all rings in such a way as to make it impossible for the enemy system to continue to exert influence over its target population by promulgating an extreme ideology. In contrast to the Warden approach, in which leadership is always the center of gravity, to counter violent extremists the U.S. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* designates radical or extremist ideology as the enemy's center of gravity.[40] Leaders such as bin Laden may promote the radical ideologies. Certainly, they should be eliminated or neutralized. But it is the ideology itself which essentially impels people to conduct violent acts of terrorism against innocent civilians.

Taking Down the Threat

Since 2001 the U.S. has been fighting the GWOT. The current strategy for combating terrorism, although sound, should be refined. The U.S. strategy refers to winning the battle of ideas in the "long run"; it advocates a "long-term approach" that involves spreading effective democracy.[41] But when we use the term "long" and think in "long" terms, we are inadvertently advancing the enemy's agenda. Extremists groups know it is in their best interests to prolong the War on Terror because over time the will of the American people will dissipate and our coalition strength will erode. We are seeing signs of this already. A systems approach to attacking the enemy should involve parallel, short-term, decisive application of power across the entire enemy system to achieve the desired ends. As mentioned in our discussion of the enemy's ends, ways, and means, due to globalization the enemy architecture is much "flatter" than in the

past. It is networked and distributed so that a successful elimination of one individual or cell means only that a replacement is forthcoming. However, non-linear, parallel attacks over a short period of time may impose a sense of futility on subsequent extremist groups and leaders – or even cause a system collapse.

We can use multiple approaches to taking down an enemy system of systems. However, the most critical thing the U.S. can do in dealing with global insurgents is to strike the systems decisively. Gen Colin Powell, USA (Ret), summed it up best in the 1992 National Military Strategy: "Once a decision for military action has been made, half-measures and confused objectives exact a severe price in the form of a protracted conflict which can cause needless waste of lives and material resources…national military strategy is the ability to rapidly assemble the forces needed to win—the concept of applying decisive force to overwhelm our adversaries and thereby terminate conflicts swiftly with minimum loss of life."[42] But we have become engaged in a protracted conflict in the Global War on Terror. The small victories we are winning are not creating a synergistic effect that paralyzes the enemy system. Without decisive victories, politically and/or militarily, we have a very limited chance of winning a lasting peace or swiftly ending the "long war." Sun Tzu recommended we must leave a way of escape when surrounding an enemy.[43] But if we leave the insurgents a way of escape, their extreme ideology will allow them to attack our homeland again, which would embroil us in fighting another limited war with limited means. This does not mean the U.S. should adopt a strategy similar to Douhet's, where we launch massive bombing attacks against enemy population centers, industries, and governments in order to shatter morale.[44] History has revealed this approach has minimal effects on morale. In twenty-first

century wars against global insurgents, the results would be similar. In fact, use of excessive force might galvanize the "fence straddlers" to join the insurgents' cause. Our applications of diplomatic, economic, informational, and military pressure must be just and decisive in order to shut down the enemy system.

According to Colin S. Gray, "Centre of gravity…organizes the bridge between means and ends that truly is the realm of strategy."[45] Based on this premise, and the just and decisive application of the instruments of national power, each of the rings in Figure 2 should be attacked in parallel, using kinetic and non-kinetic power, to impose strategic paralysis on the enemy system of systems. The adapted "Five Rings" Model in Figure 2 depicts the global insurgents' center of gravity as an extremist ideology, with successive rings surrounding and supporting the center of gravity. Using Strange's approach, the enemy system could be portrayed in a similar fashion, with extremist ideology as the CG. As described earlier, the destruction of the enemy's CG is achieved by finding vulnerable CVs and CRs supporting the CCs, which ultimately expose the CG. So exploiting those vulnerabilities yields cascading destructive effects on the system. Combining the two approaches, each of the rings in the adapted model are the critical requirements, and the vulnerabilities of these critical requirements should be exploited to affect the CR-CC-CG system. To illustrate this capability, only one critical requirement and associated critical vulnerability or node for each ring of the adapted model in Figure 2 will be discussed.[46]

To begin, the ring which Col Warden described as "system essentials" was adapted to this asymmetric enemy as terrorism's critical requirement for continued funding. Financing is essential to an extremist group, so an associated CV would be to

cut or interdict the source of funding. While the military IOP can affect some of the sources of funding through shaping efforts, most efforts to interdict funds will come from economic and diplomatic IOPs. Economically, the U.S. and its partners must ensure there are checks and balances on the transfer of larger sums of money throughout the world. In such matters, non-kinetic forms of power are vital. Information systems should be established to monitor and interdict proceeds from the sale of drugs, weapons, and humans, and to ensure they are not being used to finance terrorism. Diplomatically, the U.S. strategy recommends isolating state sponsors of terror from their target radical groups by building international cooperation and partnerships.[47] Systems are already in place to freeze assets of suspected terrorist groups through United Nations sanctions.[48] These measures should continue.

Secondly, the "infrastructure" (Warden's third ring) of global insurgents includes the *madrasas* and mosques where extremists are recruited, trained, and indoctrinated. Given the sanctity of religious structures and the strategic impact of destroying a holy mosque, the vulnerability identified in this CR must be scrupulously exploited. If a *madrasas* is known to be training and harboring terrorists, its CV could be destruction brought about through the military IOP. The difficultly with this CR is that military power against religious targets only galvanizes the will of the enemy population and gives them "ammunition" for the jihad. Information and diplomacy are thus much more effective in such matters. The non-kinetic CV of this CR is to discredit the teachings of the *madrasas* and bring them under public and international scrutiny.[49] Through an aggressive information and diplomatic campaign against the radicalism promulgated in the mosques, the clerics can lose legitimacy. The strategic task is to educate the

populace that Islam is a peaceful religion and that the establishment of Sharia Law in the Muslim world, where governance and rule of law is enforced by a radical interpretation of the *Holy Koran,* is unacceptable as well as undesirable. Any state which supports radicalism through funding illegitimate mosques should face diplomatic and economic sanctions.

The fourth ring of Warden's model is "population." The critical requirement associated with this ring is a pool of disaffected youths from which to recruit the next generation of terrorists. In "Heads We Win," David Gompert claims that "The energy source of the jihadist network, again, is the ability to resonate, recruit, and regenerate by legitimizing terrorism and martyrdom in defense of an embattled Muslim community and Islamic faith."[50] A CV of this CR is to create opportunities for disaffected members of society to prosper without resorting to terrorism. Economic and informational IOPs are vital in this area. They must focus on the people by meeting their essential needs through economic aid and programs to improve their quality of life and economic opportunity. These constructive measures discredit oppressive leaders and lend the credibility needed for popular support against violent extremism. In essence, these initiatives contribute to a "hearts and minds" campaign where the hearts are affected by targeting the population with good will, while the minds are affected through education programs which deligitimize radical Islamic ideologies.[51]

The final critical requirement that supports the "violent ideology" center of gravity is terrorists or cells of terrorists that execute violent acts. Warden used the term "fielded forces" for his fifth ring and, as in Desert Storm, these asymmetric "fielded forces" need to be eliminated. The CV of the terrorists is their ability to avoid capture or destruction.

Kinetically destroying these cells with the military IOP is the most effective deterrent to future acts of violence. Information systems and data sharing among coalition partners are also effective in rooting out terror cells. Diplomatically, terrorists can be alienated from their popular support base, thereby exposing them to identification and capture. While the capability of terror cells to organize and gain funding is often blamed on globalization, in *The Pentagon's New Map*, Thomas Barnett offers an interesting perspective. He believes that making "globalization truly global" will enable everyone to operate by similar rules, thereby creating less disparity among the *haves* and *have-nots*, ultimately reducing "shocks to the system."[52]

The U.S. should focus its strategy on the near-term goals of exploiting the enemy's critical vulnerabilities. Since all the CVs are directly linked to the CRs, and ultimately to the CG, it is possible to induce strategic paralysis by striking across the entire system in parallel. However, the enemy is always adapting, therefore our strategy must adapt as well. If the enemy strategy favors a long war, why should our strategy commit to a long war? Additionally, each of the cited nodes or critical vulnerabilities is part of the violent extremists' ends, ways, and means, which is exactly why the U.S. strategy must keep these in mind when countering the global insurgency.

Making Persistent Conflict Not So Persistent

The keys to lessening the persistence of the global insurgency are to ensure the U.S. maintains its strength for the future conflict and uses strategic communication effectively to send the right message regarding U.S. involvement. If the enemy system is taken down, but in the process the U.S. does not retain the power to keep the threat down, our efforts will be in vain. To ensure the U.S. maintains its strength, we must

continue to build coalitions and strong partnerships with nations of the Islamic world. It is vitally important to have these governments and prominent Muslim clerics continue to speak out against violent extremism. The synergy of sustaining a global effort against the enemy cannot be overstated. Against this ideologically driven foe, our most important allies are arguably moderate Islamic nations throughout the world. The combined strategic communication efforts of the U.S. and moderate Muslim nations will prevent terrorists from gaining the popular support they desperately need to sustain their operations and legitimacy. No matter how hard a blow we strike against the global insurgent threat, terrorist violence will continue for some time. So we and our allies must retain the strength and will to counter the threat when the challenges are presented.

Effective strategic communication will assure that the terrorist threat is less persistent in the future. Probably the most important thing the U.S. can do in this area is not impose democracy on every nation, but to work with coalition partners to show we are not waging war against the religion of Islam. The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* uses the word democracy thirty-two times and identifies advancing effective democracy as the long-term solution to combating terrorism.[53] This rhetoric will only breed anti-American sentiment in many non-Western societies and fuel the ideologies of violent extremists. Raphael Perl in his Congressional Research Service Report claims that:

> [M]aking democratization a pillar of U.S. counterterrorism strategy while pursuing regime change only selectively in the region generates cynicism and distrust throughout the region—and the world—regarding U.S. motives. This, in turn, may undermine support for democratization efforts, if not directly provoke increased support for terrorist activity in nations

such as Iraq, Afghanistan, or other states tenuously allied with the United States.[54]

Instead of repeating the term "democracy," an effective strategic communication strategy should use words like "effective governance," "rule of law," and "human rights." Likewise, our strategic message should repeatedly emphasize that GWOT is not a war against the Islamic faith. The violent extremist groups' recruiting efforts claim that Islam is under attack by apostates and infidels, thereby urging alienated and vulnerable young people to defend their faith.

What Does Success Look Like?

In order to evaluate "success" of this proposed strategy, two metrics should be used. First, monitor the number of prominent Middle Eastern Islamic clerics speaking out against radical forms of Islam. Since governance and rule of law in Islamic nations is based on the teachings of the *Holy Koran*, an increase in clerical denouncements of Sharia Law would be a clear indicator that the system is being paralyzed. Much of the funding and education in radical extremism comes through *madrasas*, whose indoctrination supports the "violent ideology" center of gravity. According to the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, "Responsible Islamic leaders need to denounce an ideology that distorts and exploits Islam to justify the murder of innocent people and defiles a proud religion."[55] Until Muslim clerics do this, extremists groups will retain their social support structure.

A second metric would be an increase or decrease of representative governments in Muslim countries. One of the main reasons there is a pool of zealots willing to sacrifice themselves in the name of Allah is that people are being oppressed by their governments with no hopes of improving their social condition. Disaffected men and

women are turning to violence to express themselves because they are being denied certain human rights. So the goal need not be to spread democracy, but to assure average Muslims have a voice in their governments. More representative governments would improve rule of law and increase good governance, and hopefully decrease corruption and political oppression, which support radicalism.

Conclusion

The traditional American way of war has been defined in terms of unconditional surrender of the enemy, winning decisive battles, and establishing democratic principles throughout the world. However, since World War II the United States has engaged in limited wars, with limited objectives, using limited means. These conflicts have tended to erode our national will, enabling our enemies to gain strength and "battlespace" to expand their initiatives. But the U.S. does not need to redefine victory. Rather, it needs to refine its objectives and ensure that the nation's political objectives and national military strategies are congruent. The nature and conduct of warfare in the twenty-first century is different than in the past; indeed globalization has changed the nature of the battlefield. It would be nonsensical to think our national IOPs could ever thwart all terrorist acts. But used decisively and wisely, they can contain or reduce the threats. It may be that success needs to be redefined as we engage an irrational enemy like violent extremists, because unconditional surrender of an ideologically driven non-state actor may not be possible. A systems approach to decisively attacking an enemy in order to induce strategic paralysis, as described in this SRP, can warrant claims of success – even of victory.

Endnote

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