

CULTURE WARFARE: A WAR AGAINST CULTURE

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

CULTURE WARFARE: A WAR AGAINST CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

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CULTURE WARFARE: A WAR ON CULTURE

The ideology of an insurgent movement, then, offers a critique of the existing order, and it articulates an alternative set of values and beliefs. It makes sense of grievances against the prevailing order, and it legitimizes the use of violence against it.¹

—Peter Neumann and M. L. R. Smith

Why is America hated so much? Are Americans really that bad? Are we like the prom king and queen of countries, the captain of the football team or the head cheer leader that is detested? Perception is certainly reality. In this case, it's the perception of the non-western world, specifically extreme Islamists, verses the western societies and namely the United States as the focal point and target of so much of their hate and discontent. Cultural differences have existed since the dawn of time. And with these differences man has struggled with the knowledge of someone other than his family, tribe, or village co-existing on this planet. Typically, larger cultures have absorbed smaller cultures and forcefully made the smaller culture part of the larger culture. In America's current fight, it is more than a struggle against Al Qaeda or the extreme Islamist of the Taliban government, but one against culture. It is a fight against culture and ideology that the U.S is not willing to go to the lengths of ancient empires in completely absorbing or destroying the smaller adversary. As Hendrik Spruyt points out in his article, "American Empire" as an Analytic Question or a Rhetorical Move?, the U.S is clearly not an empire, but has some contradicting policies that resemble many failed empires i.e.

American ambitions also resemble the intrusiveness that comes with modern empire. Not content with policing external policies the current administration has sought to change domestic political systems, adjudicate religious and ethnic rivalries, and foster liberal capitalist tenets.

Inevitably, these attempts to alter the existing local order have led to local resistance.²

The challenge for the U.S. is to balance national interests, globalization, and the cross-roads internationally where the two meet that is often riddled with ethnic conflict and survivability. The perception from some of these cultures is that the U.S. is building an empire and looks to eliminate their sovereignty. Why is perception and cultural beliefs so important and crucial during these trying times? According to Dr. Samuel P. Huntington and Dr. Lawrence E. Harrison, “ A growing number of scholars, journalists, politicians, and development practitioners are focusing on the role of cultural values and attitudes as facilitators of, or obstacles to, progress.”³

Perception goes both ways obviously, but whose perception is most important? Is it self-recognition or the perception and lens of our allies, or our enemies, possibly those that are on the fence and unsure if they are going to like you or not? America has fallen into an era where she is no longer beloved internationally (if she ever was), even when she is most helpful and generous to those in need from natural disaster or self-imposed conflicts. It can be likened to school yard antics where no one really likes the winner, and the winner in this aspect is the United States and her closest western allies. One example of this phenomenon of bandwagoning is seen in Dr. Daniel Benjamin’s *America and the World in the Age of Terror*.⁴ Perhaps there are some that tolerate the winner at most and even try to get close to the winner and perhaps become a winner by association or at a minimum, utilize the protective cover of the winner. This is only a fleeting feeling and one’s awareness of internal shortcomings are soon realized. To borrow a phrase from the TV series “Highlander” There can only be one! Citizens from every society and continent can relate to the feeling of not liking the winner or the

person/country on top. If it's football season and a team is making a run on a perfect schedule, there will always be some fans that just don't want to see the team complete the perfect season regardless of how they truly feel about the team with the perfect season at stake.

From the enemies' perspective, what is the issue with America? What is the one reason that most extreme Islamist cultures hate western societies so much? Perhaps there isn't a single reason, but several factors could have some impact on the overall assessment of a culture that most hard-line Islamists would agree is vile and disgusting especially from a pure Islamist sense. Failed marriages, unruly children, and an unjust society are only a few examples of what may be truly the issue that the Islamic world has with America. Other aspects could be the capitalist mindset and the greed and lack of family values it inevitably breeds the lack of true checks and balances on the rich and famous. Multiple cars, houses, and debt that undermine the idea of being sensible and a minimalist that doesn't need "items" to define self-identity. The baseline of the American culture has predominately shifted from thrifty to one of spending even if you don't have the means to finance a certain lifestyle, this is clearly evident as America is undergoing/recovering from a recession, yet still spends as if there is no tomorrow. This type of wanton disregard for one's personal and government finances and well-being of the family and collective tribe are possibly an illustration of why we are so despicable in an extreme Islamist view point.

In this paper we will explore the ideology of some of the extreme Islamic communities, the evolution of warfare from state vs. state actors to non-state actors, and what, if anything, can American's do to change or influence the extreme Islamist's

ideology and win this non-traditional battle. Afghanistan will be the focus of attention as we continue to conduct combat operations in a complex environment throughout the region. As there are many cultural influences throughout Afghanistan, I will specifically be addressing Taliban and Al Qaeda cultures.

Ideology

As told by Rohan Gunaratna in his book *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* Al Qaeda's ideology and belief system revolves around jihad and the context in which Al Qaeda and other contemporary Islamists may misinterpret, corrupt and misrepresent the word of God to generate support for their political mission.⁵ With this potential misrepresentation or even blatant disregard for known truths by Al Qaeda and some extreme Islamists and the multitude of believers capable of being reached through madrasahs, mass media and the internet a formidable gap continues to grow between some of the Islamic world and the United States and continues to threaten both her and its allies.

Islam has always been at the very centre of the lives of ordinary Afghan people. Whether it is saying one's prayers five times a day, fasting in Ramadan or giving *zakat*-an Islamic contribution to the poor – few Muslim peoples in the world observe the rituals and the piety of Islam with such regularity and emotion as the Afghans.⁶

An alarming amount of non-state actors have evolved and engaged in lethal attacks against America and its closest allies. These attacks are carried out to try and undermine the will of western societies and highlight the corrupt morals of westerners in the name of religion. Westerners must quickly change their age-old perspective of traditional warfare. Wars have long been thought of as the utilization of force upon an opposing opponent in order to implement your will and desired end state. According to Carl Von Clausewitz, "War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale...Each tries through

physical force to compel the other to do his will; his *immediate* aim is to *throw* his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance.”⁷ (Italics in original) This traditional mindset must be shifted to fit the 21st century and non-state actors that don't operate within the framework of traditional warfare. The duels are most-likely lopsided/unbalanced in the current state. Extremists use terrorism to try and change the scope of warfare and balance out the obvious known imbalance. The U.S. and other western societies must re-evaluate the condition or end state that defines victory due to the changing landscape of the “battlefield” and the type of warfare that is shaping the new 21st century battles with non-state actors. The U.S. must be able to identify the political objectives of extreme Islamists and Al Qaeda in order to understand the rationale in which attacks are carried out against non-combatants. They must know the enemy to as much extent possible. Victory many times for the enemy is about maintaining and surviving. It is not about winning battles, engagements, or small skirmishes, but typically vanquishing the opponent from their territory/land once the opponent has tried to infiltrate or colonize a territory. Although this isn't a new concept or tactic, the difference is in the realization that there is no other ulterior motive or desire other than to be left alone and allowed to self-govern as seen fit. This could be seen as self-defense or just a survival mechanism. As depicted in Thomas Barfield's *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*,

The Russians found it impossible to permanently suppress the opposition in spite of inflicting heavy casualties, though. Of course since the Afghan definition of victory consisted of a Soviet withdrawal, all the resistance needed to do was to make the country ungovernable and a drain on Soviet resources.⁸

The Afghan people didn't want foreigners on their soil, no more than any other society of people wants or desires invaders to their respective territories. To meet the ever-

changing face of combat in the 21st century, the Army has recently updated and finalized FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency (2006). The armed forces have clearly seen the writing on the wall and acknowledged the need for cultural training and an appreciation of an adaptive force:

You cannot fight former Saddamists and Islamic extremists the same way you would have fought the Viet Cong, the Moros, or the Tupamaros; the application of principles and fundamentals to deal with each vary considerably. Nonetheless, all insurgencies, even today's highly adaptable strains, remain wars amongst the people, employ variations of standard themes, and adhere to elements of a recognizable revolutionary campaign plan.⁹

But how much is "enough" in order to obtain one's stated objectives or end-state? Clearly U.S. forces don't have unlimited time and resources to study a potential enemy or learn every aspect of a particular culture. Understanding the many facets of a culture and why one would resist change is a dizzying task. Clearly defining the end state has to be a priority for the current administration and articulating this to the Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) that are tasked with obtaining these objectives has to occur on every level down to the ground pounder. Fighting a seemingly invincible opponent that has weathered the storm of multiple nation states without absolute defeat has to appear to be a formidable task. Mr. Barfield cites the influence of state actors for many of the issues within Afghanistan. Civil wars have continued throughout generations, but it was outside influence from colonial powers that made the most impact in determining winners and losers by the amount of funding that was provided to either warring side.¹⁰ Once outsiders conceded defeat, the fight for power ensued within the country eventually giving rise to the Taliban late in the 20th century. Becoming popular because of the security they provided, the Taliban's ideology was soon even too much for the Afghans'.

The Taliban were initially lauded for bringing peace and security to the regions they captured, but their social and religious policies became widely unpopular thereafter, particularly in the cities...Ordinary Afghans believed their existing practice of Islam was already so inherently superior to that of other Muslims that it needed no change.¹¹

With this type of ideology, there's no wonder why cultural training is so crucial for DoD.

Fortunately, the Taliban's ideology consisted of actions within their borders and didn't go any further. Mostly raised in Pakistan as refugees, the Taliban saw themselves as "fixing" or righting the ship of internal turmoil in Afghanistan. Giving safe harbor/refuge to foreign jihadists would eventually prove to be the downfall of the Taliban, due to their reluctance to turn over Al Qaeda members that orchestrated the attacks on the U.S. September 11, 2001. "The first step was to demand that the Taliban government in Afghanistan hand over Osama bin Laden. Mullah Omar instinctively refused."¹² Mullah Omar was known for his belief in not giving up his visitor but was required through obligation of hospitality to protect his guest even at the risk of his own life.¹³ This made an American invasion post September 11, 2001 almost inevitable due to the heightened sense of some type of needed response or retaliation by the Bush administration.

Military commanders are recognizing the importance of cultural training to the lowest level service members. This training allows the war-fighter on the ground to effectively interact with the local populace and build rapport in the host nation in order to support the overall effort against the insurgency as evidenced in FM 3-24, "COIN is largely executed by squads and platoons. Small-unit actions in a COIN environment often have greater impacts than similar actions during major combat operations. Engagements are often won or lost in moments; whoever can bring combat power to bear in seconds wins."¹⁴ This squad-level approach has obvious advantages in this culturally sensitive environment. However, a light squad approach also has it

disadvantages. If politicians argue that light-fielded forces are the way of future warfare and begin to eliminate budgets for large conventional forces this could potentially be tragic. Some aspects of what editor Dr. J. Boone Bartholomees terms as “Counter Underdog Strategies” warrant some consideration. In *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy*, Dr. Bartholomees, Jr. states, “It tended to be symmetric in the sense that it analyzed insurgencies and then attempted to beat them at their own game and in their chosen arena. Modern counterinsurgency theory tends to recognize the political nature of most insurgencies and approach them holistically rather than from a primarily military point of view.”¹⁵

Development of new strategies will be essential in defeating a new-age warrior. Cultural differences and clashes of culture will exist in wars fought in the 21st century and possibly beyond into the foreseeable future. These differences are the catalyst for most conflict. Surprisingly Dr. Bartholomees doesn’t cite Dr. Samuel P. Huntington’s theory in the “Clash of Civilizations.” Huntington’s theory states “The local conflicts most likely to escalate into broader wars are those between groups and states from different civilizations. Power is shifting from the long predominant West to non-Western civilizations”¹⁶ I feel that Dr. Huntington’s theory has considerable merit, although, it shouldn’t be the only consideration. Another consideration is to try and limit these local conflicts and prevent them from escalating through military power along the lines of deterrence when possible and appropriate. However, if we as a nation draw down our sizeable armed forces to focus on irregular factions and bands of rebels (current focus), we would do our country an enormous disservice in the reduction of our power projection capability. The Secretary of Defense has made the point that the U.S. can’t

afford to focus solely on low-intensity conflicts, but must also preserve heavy armor and firepower coupled with full-spectrum training.¹⁷ Power projection and deterrence have allowed the U.S. to benefit from relative peace since the last world war and the collapse of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Conflicts and civil wars such as Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, and Grenada have all been examples of the level and type of involvement the U.S. has participated in over the last 50 years. This example encompasses large scale wars i.e. Korea and Vietnam where U.S. losses were significant and smaller conflicts i.e. Bosnia, which saw no U.S. troops on foreign soil in combat roles. Eliminating or drawing down the enormous military presence provided by the U.S. in favor of a smaller elite force would only invite disaster in the form of not being able to deter and de-escalate cultural differences. It also points out that DoD has to remain flexible and adaptive, ready for any contingency large or small.

In order to remain successful at the cross-cultural challenges faced in the 21st century, military officers will need to continue to recognize the need for cultural training. This cultural training will facilitate an awareness that resonates down to the lowest squad member providing him or her with a frame of reference of how to deal with host nations and environments that he/she may find them operating from within. Cross-cultural training has to be implemented early and often in a training cycle in order to gain an appreciation of the culturally sensitive environment and to stress

Evolution

The evolution of warfare has transcended all cultures and nations alike. Considering known and observed cultural differences, how well equipped are the armed forces to meet today's cultural challenges and the strategic level considerations to combat and defend against an enemy willing to go to any lengths to destroy and

terrorize the infidels(again the US and her allies)? An alarming number of non-state actors have evolved and engaged in lethal attacks against America and her closest allies. These attacks are carried out undermine the U. S. and western values, while promoting the purity of Islam beliefs in the name of religion.

Another source of opposition to traditional Afghan Islam is represented by Islamic fundamentalism. This looks at traditional Afghan practices and Sufic influences as syncretic accretions, with roots in the subcontinent or pre-Muslim society. Fundamentalism influences on Afghan Islam were represented by Deobandi and Wahabi or Salafist approaches, brought in from madrassas abroad and supported with foreign money.¹⁸

Westerners must quickly change their age-old perspective of traditional warfare of state vs. state actors. Wars for centuries have been known and seen as the utilization of force upon an opposing opponent in order to implement your will and desired end state. This traditional mindset, while still true, must be shifted to adapt the fit for the 21st century and non-state actors that don't operate within the framework of traditional warfare or state actors. They are typically independent political opponents with no sense of nationality other than the cause for which they stand. The U.S. and other western societies must re-evaluate the condition or end state that defines victory due to the changing landscape of the "battlefield" and the type of warfare that is shaping the new 21st century battles with non-state actors. This is important, because anyone with a political cause and some meager backing could cause an uprising and spur significant dissent within otherwise stable regions that could bankrupt larger organized organizational governments, internationally recognized, that try and defeat these small pockets of resistance. I feel that war between two internationally recognized state actors is becoming obsolete and a way of the past. I believe that this will become more valid in the 21st century. I believe that war occurs on multiple levels and can exist

between state and non-state actors. The 21st century and the increasing ease of the use and availability of technology, i.e. the internet, has allowed non-state actors to broadcast their ideals on a larger and broader audience.

Internet usage has allowed non-state actors ease in influencing the economy and allowing a broader base in which to further their own cause and beliefs. As Professor Weimann illustrates in his book *Terror on the Internet*,

Terrorist groups can maintain Web pages to present their case, disseminate propaganda, and recruit followers and supporters. Through the Internet they can easily reach a vast audience in a direct and uncensored way and place themselves on the international stage. In the conventional media, if some message should seem dangerous to a government or the public, it can be censored or filtered. However, the Internet does not allow for the same degree of control.¹⁹

The internet continues to be a successful recruiting tool and allows for easy communication and monitoring within the non-state actors' military elements and their respective supporters. In addition to the internet, the proliferation of weapon systems has allowed non-state actors relatively easy access to 21st century technology, allowing them to "reach out and touch" and influence populations that are otherwise somewhat immune to insurgents. The internet gives them a viable voice. Media propaganda and proliferation of weapons systems from actors such as Iran only incite the capacity to broadcast and display their capability nationwide without any fear of reprisal.

The proliferation of missiles to Taliban terrorists demonstrates why Pentagon leaders are so concerned about Iran continuing to produce nuclear materials, which those military brass fear will be used to produce nuclear weapons. Not only would that mean Iran would wield atomic threats, igniting a nuclear arms race across the Middle East, it also would mean Iran might proliferate nuclear weapons to terrorist groups such as the Taliban and al Qaeda²⁰

This new technology and increased lethality of non-state actors must be addressed. "Fundamentalists may embrace the tools and technology of modernity; but

they are not modernizers, looking instead to achieve the pure Islam of the distant past, with the Shias seen as the most damaging polluters of the pure spring.”²¹ This new mindset of war in the 21st century doesn’t lend itself to the concept of the “center of gravity” approach that Clausewitz promotes as a source of will of the enemy to continue to resist and draw upon as a source of power and where all of our energies should be focused. The center of gravity for non-state actors may be unrecognizable to senior strategic leaders in the 21st century. Cultural ignorance may not allow those of western mind-sets to identify or label a center of gravity for Al Qaeda or extreme Islamists. Through message and propaganda, terrorists illuminate that the newly established “western” style government is unable to protect and/or provide for the populace in a way better or inconsistent with what they offer people from their own cultural background. Through lethal terrorist acts, Al Qaeda and the Taliban cause confusion and create a sense of terror within the local populace that undermine the efforts of westerners. The message, the source of their power/will, aims to discredit the western system of beliefs and values, or lack there-of, in order to gain support from the populace and prove to the local populace that the non-state actor can provide security better for the populace than the established government can and is far more capable and trustworthy as long as the populace cooperates with the non-state actor. This “new age” warfare poses many challenges at identification of the center of gravity of a non-state actor, and then secondly, how to attack what we have identified as that center of gravity and reduce the lethality of attacks from non-state actors. In this regard, I tend to favor Warden’s theory of strategic rings taken from the *Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*.

Warden views the enemy as a system of targets arrayed in five strategic rings; the innermost and most important is leadership, or the brain of the

organization. One can win by striking that inner ring so frequently and violently that the enemy is essentially paralyzed and never able to mount an effective defense.²²

I believe that military forces, if possible, should focus on opposing military forces prior to attacking the enemy populace as depicted in Warden's rings. Militaries should not be brought to bear against non-combatants. Combat should occur, to every extent possible, between two armed belligerents. A war amongst non-combatants or civil populace is inhumane. However, with the non-traditional battlegrounds of the 21st century, this will become more and more challenging because most wars/conflicts will be fought in populated areas and littoral regions which constitute the majority percentage of populations.

Continuing with my idea of war occurring between state and non-state actors, the nature of war has not changed, but the opponent has certainly in size and capability. No longer are we witnessing two opposing armies equally matched drawing battle lines across the plains from each other, but rather we are experiencing fights that occur between opponent's agendas and are viewed through public media sources and public opinion. Clausewitz believes that war exists between two opposing forces with differing political objectives. "War, however, is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass (total nonresistance would be no war at all) but always the collision of two living forces. The ultimate aim of waging war, as formulated here, must be taken as applying to both sides. Once again, there is interaction."²³ I agree that war is between two or more actors however, not necessarily functioning state actors as has been traditionally thought when considering armed conflict. Thus, the type of warfare that will most likely occur in future engagements will likely involve a non-conventional force with abstract ideals. Non-state actors utilizing media and internet forums can easily create a rift

between the governed and the government coupled with lethal attacks that target personnel and infrastructure. This is a most-challenging objective for our leaders in the 21st century, especially in strategy development arenas.

We as strategic leaders and thinkers must consider our opponent. As Richard D. Lewis states, “ If you are able to see yourself or your culture from the outside and think more objectively as a consequence, you will have a good chance of clearing away certain cultural barriers that would have impeded access to others’ thoughts or personalities.”²⁴ Cultural considerations must be in the forefront of any critical analysis of efforts against non-state actors. In order to counter the non-state actors’ strategic offensive moves, the challenge will be to determine the non-state actors’ ultimate objective. Once the non-state actors’ ultimate objectives are identified, Americans must as a primary end state, attempt to limit the lethality of non-state actors. By limiting their lethality, non-state actors could be rendered ineffective in their attempts to impart suffering and personal property destruction to the U.S. and her allies. Non-state actors would become a group of disarmed and disgruntled individuals unable to attack anyone beyond their immediate area of operations. Limiting their lethality would force non-state actors to seek alternative means, hopefully non-violent means, to achieve their objectives. But what can be done to render them ineffective or to fold them into productive members of society?

Winning the War on Terror

Is this possible? What does victory look like? As defined in the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism:

From the beginning, we understood that the War on Terror involved more than simply finding and bringing to justice those who had planned and executed the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Our strategy

involved destroying the larger al-Qaida network and also confronting the radical ideology that inspired others to join or support the terrorist movement...As laid out in this strategy, to win the War on Terror, we will:

- Advance effective democracies as the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism;
- Prevent attacks by terrorist networks;
- Deny weapons of mass destruction to rogue states and terrorist allies who seek to use them;
- Deny terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states;
- Deny terrorists control of any nation they would use as a base and launching pad for terror; and
- Lay the foundations and build the institutions and structures we need to carry the fight forward against terror and help ensure our ultimate success.²⁵

Eliminating funding sources for non-state actors would be a great start if this were possible. Without finances any military or political action is just a dream. Small or large terrorist groups typically prey on individuals that are from poor, low-income generating societies with ideologies that are vulnerable, this was especially true with the birth of the Taliban in Pakistani refugee camps. And while the Taliban were not originally born as a terrorist organization, they did come to power in a messy civil war within Afghanistan with overwhelming force and power. Pakistan utilized its resources (funding) to influence the Taliban and thus try and control/manipulate activities in Afghanistan. Planning and funding large-scale lethal operations can't be done without adequate funding. We must analyze and thoroughly explore the identification of all

possible sources of revenue and seek to diplomatically convince the identified money sources that it would not be in their best interest to continue supporting terrorist organizations. This is one of the most significant challenges to tackle from a westerners' perspective. Westerners are competing against cultural norms that have existed long before the U.S. and its allies.

The war is not just against a group of individuals, but against a culture (albeit the extremists) itself. Through an information campaign we could attempt to petition non-state supporters to eliminate this revenue stream in the interest of global economic gain and stability for the region. This information campaign would from a cultural stand-point have to stress the retention of Islamic values and not necessarily an adaptation of western values, but an adaptation of stability for the greater good of prosperity for all concerned. This is an essential element for this particular action in order to eliminate the generation of revenue for such lethal attacks. The U.S. has the means through diplomatic influence, economic sanctions and threat of military action to coerce or forcefully suggest the non-support of terrorism. "Effective disruption of funding sources and interdiction of transfer mechanisms can help our partners and us to starve terrorists networks of the material support they require."²⁶ In some political circles the debate continues on the justification to utilize military action in ungoverned areas that may have terrorist activities associated with non-state actors and terrorist organizations. This debate is non-conclusive, but supporters argue that if threats from non-state actors are valid, the U.S. must do everything in its power to protect its infrastructure and citizens.

The world populace would be extremely accepting of this attack on funding sources as all cultures and civilizations have been affected by this deadly array of

terrorist activities either directly or indirectly. Additionally, this would be a win for most as attacks would subside and human lives and businesses would not suffer. The acceptability may be challenged in the aspects of what the U.S. would do if a state actor would balk at the suggestion of eliminating support to a non-state actor or unilateral invasion into an ungoverned territory. Neither the U.S. nor her allies can afford another long-drawn out war or engagement. Although the threat is universal, the cost of another global war or conflict may prove too costly for the populace to bear in accepting a course of action that may involve the provocation of war with a third-party nation that is hosting or funding terrorism especially if that entity obtains nuclear weapons.

Removing the source and capabilities of funding would effectively eliminate the possibility of any future attacks, thus meeting the objective of eliminating the lethality and frequency of attacks. Without funding, attacks would not be able to be planned, carried out, or be as lethal due to lack of resources and capabilities.

Another potential step in winning this battle is alleviating safe havens. While this won't completely destroy or alleviate an enemy it may slow or prevent large-scale attack planning and orchestration. In eliminating safe-havens hopefully, the enemy would be so displaced that he would be assimilated into cultures that would deter him/her from plotting future attacks. Although this may be an idealist point of view, one can dream. State-actors abroad have the brunt of the work and responsibility in eliminating safe havens and not allowing known terrorist groups to assemble, train, recruit, and plan within their respective borders. State-actors that are harboring or allowing terrorist groups safe haven and could potentially be their financial sponsors and thus willingly condone terrorist activities and sometimes promote their existence for selfish gain

through the destruction or terror of others or in animosity towards America and its allies should cease this support. Allowing safe havens, and the ability to conduct terrorist operations or activities within “state boundaries” for non-state actors, gives the non-state actors freedom of maneuver and ease in planning and carrying out their agendas typically against the U.S. and her allies. Terrorist organizations are able to recruit, train, and equip individuals to carry out lethal attacks all over the world without the fear of reprisal. The uncertainty, potential quickness, and effectiveness at which non-state actors can attack makes them that much more lethal and terrorizing to civil and mostly western societies.

Unfortunately, due to America’s status not all state-actors that are suspected or believed to harbor terrorist groups will allow the western armed forces access to their territory in order to find and defeat terrorist groups. Additionally, as stated before in the acceptability would wane if protest were given or anticipated from a state actor that was more than willing to defend the right to harbor and sponsor terrorist activities. Without the possibility of access to a sponsoring country’s area to conduct counter terrorism operations, it’s near-impossible to eliminate the safe havens, thus the non-state actors are afforded opportunities to continue planning lethal attacks. Additionally, American efforts in negotiating for the elimination of safe-havens and the eradication of state-actor sponsorship of non-state actors and terrorism have thus far failed miserably not giving much hope that this effort will gain any traction in the near future. The selling point would have to include overwhelming evidence of the exact location of terrorist organizations and the capacity of identified organizations to conduct attacks that potentially harm America and her allies. Economic assistance could be offered to those

that are willing participants in governing and policing areas previously known to support terrorists groups. Eliminating safe havens goes beyond mere economic costs crossing into acceptability for the lives that will be lost in eliminating safe havens and international public perception of the U.S. in global supremacy and a perception of “Empire Building”. America cannot afford to wager her sons and daughters in war against non-state actors that provide safe havens to those that will participate in terrorism. The cost to the American people is far too great, and terrorist attacks, while extreme and non-discriminating, will not destroy the American way of life. Another way of attempting to eliminate safe havens and support to those that are indifferent concerning the use of terrorist acts towards western countries is through economic means of stimulating jobs and the economy so that other means of making a living are available besides fighting/supporting non-state actors’ causes which you may or may not support. Through job growth and economic stimuli, potential fighters have other means to provide for their families and their basic survival needs are met.

Building mutual agreement/understanding will require some patience over time. Seeking to possibly eliminate the sources of conflict and disdain through diplomatic ways is a challenging task to say the least. It would only be feasible if the non-state actors were willing to come to the table and in essence compromise on some of their beliefs along with acceptance of westerners and their respective values and beliefs. The means of this mutual agreement could come through mediation by a neutral party. Neutral parties could host and facilitate meetings in neutral settings agreeable to all members involved in mediation.

The acceptability of westerners is questionable and is the challenge as both parties (actors and non-state actors) must be willing to compromise to some degree and for those outside of the decision-making process to adhere to the agreement, especially concerning non-state actors who typically don't follow the rules of any governing authority. The compromise on behalf of the non-state actors would involve accepting some western ways and values into their strict system of beliefs which have often times been referred to as disillusioned. I feel this is not that too much of a stretch of their values as indications of non-state actors utilizing the internet for recruiting and planning purposes certainly falls into the category of begging to accept western culture and benefitting from the advances that have been made possible through a capitalist society. For the non-state actors to realize the potential benefits of mutual agreement and economic growth to the region from this action of acceptability, may be too costly in the threat of globalization to the region and increased western influence in their backyards. Although this would be an ideal outcome, non-state actors may find it to appalling to accept western values and beliefs in their native homelands.

In conclusion 21st century officers are more aware and culturally sensitive to an ever-changing political, social, and economic environment. Cultural awareness training must be stressed at all levels and throughout an Army Forces Generation cycle. Culturally keen officers must continue to extend their awareness not only down through their squads, but also throughout their political affiliations and sphere of influence. Military liaisons must make every effort to educate political entities in cultural sensitivities and ensure every consideration of all elements of power are utilized to resolve potential conflicts. In order to create this overarching awareness the mentality

of today's officers must remain consistent and remain adaptive to changing circumstances. The volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment produces an ever-present need for officers to be able to re-adjust fire on the fly. Today's officers must remain flexible, vigilant, and open to new ideas when dealing with insurgencies. The counterinsurgency fight is one that is always different and exists on multiple levels permeating the host-nation's culture. Culturally aware officers should take every possible consideration when dealing with host-nation cultures and be aware of their unwanted presence and govern themselves accordingly when operating abroad.

Strategic officers must look at all aspects and elements of national power to accomplish the mission using the diplomatic means and threat of military action on state sponsors of non-state actors/terrorist groups would be an effective mechanism of eliminating state-sponsored terrorism. Overcoming cultural differences may be a bridge-to-far, but is one that must remain in focus. Asking the enemy to change his culture may only exist in utopia, but it begs the question of how will we overcome cultural differences? Sun Tzu states, "Only when the enemy could not be overcome by these means was there recourse to armed force, which was to be applied so that victory was gained: (a) in the shortest possible time; (b) at the least possible cost in lives and effort; [and] (c) with infliction on the enemy of the fewest possible casualties."²⁷

Diplomatic and economic action through this COA provides a feasible alternative to armed conflict or violence, but military action should not be ruled out as a means for meeting the objective of limiting the lethality of non-state actors. I believe that capitalism and the growth of smaller nation-states is the key to peace, although non-state actors may not agree with this thinking, they may become receptive over time.

Regardless of the type of government, as long as a state is prospering through free-trade and economic growth, then violence, war, and bloodshed should be avoided to the greatest degree possible and it will give those individuals that were once involved in planting IEDs another means of employment possibilities. Cultural differences may not be overcome, but the need to address and observe/recognize the differences is crucial, if at a last resort war is necessary. The risk of not taking any steps in curbing lethal terrorist attacks could eventually cripple many western societies and the free-market system. If non-state actors accumulate enough resources and launch an intricate well-coordinated attack, a severe blow to economies and populations (lives lost) would result. The ensuing retaliatory attacks, if waged by the U.S. and her allies, could potentially have devastating effects to the economy and militaries that further cripple the economy to a point where self-recovery isn't an option.

Endnotes

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