

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

IRREGULAR WARFARE – PERHAPS NOT SO “IRREGULAR”

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to provide a clearer understanding of what is currently being characterized by the Department of Defense (DoD) as Irregular Warfare. The context of this assessment is taken through the lens of existing literature and draft documentation coupled with the application of historical references and perspectives to support the argument that this new form of warfare is not so irregular. Since the horrific terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, senior civilian and military leaders have acknowledged a national need to effect fundamental change to improve effectiveness in defeating irregular challenges. This paper reviews national policy and the myriad of DoD efforts and other subject matter expert working groups that have taken on the monumental task of framing an irregular warfare environment. Next, an assessment of these efforts reveals a remarkable similarity of operations and activities used to describe this new warfighting environment to those defined through history. Coincidentally, these are the same operations and activities outlined in existing doctrine that our military actively employs in operations today. At the conclusion of this paper, recommendations are provided to help focus understanding and further promulgation of the term Irregular Warfare should it continue to gain momentum.

IRREGULAR WARFARE – PERHAPS NOT SO “IRREGULAR”

Irregular Warfare, which uses focused acts of violence to create conditions for the psychological defeat of a state, is a recurring reality...

- Andrew Garfield,
Lincoln Group Terrorist Research Center, United Kingdom.¹

Among the many 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) challenges faced by the Army's Quadrennial Defense Review Office (QDRO) is the emergence of what is thought to be the most likely threat facing the United States in the next five to ten years – Irregular Warfare. Major General Robert Durbin, Director of the Army's QDRO, has stated that “going into this QDR and perhaps coming out, I would predict that we will have Irregular Warfare as well defined or as ill defined as we had homeland defense defined coming out of QDR (2001). There is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to ensure we identify what that challenge is.”² The principal authors of the 2005 QDR are now challenged with a very sensitive and volatile subject of what is being characterized by the Department of Defense (DoD) as Irregular Warfare, but is it such an unfamiliar form of warfare for DoD and the United States Military?

Irregular Warfare certainly has captured the attention of those in the military Services and the DoD as a new and unfamiliar form of warfare resulting from challenges associated with the global war of terrorism (GWOT), and more specifically, ongoing military operations in Iraq. However, a closer look at various definitions being circulated in the DoD community and senior civilian analytical organizations suggests that Irregular Warfare comprises forms of warfare such as combating terrorism or insurgency that are very familiar to our United States military Services. The military's familiarity and knowledge of these types of operations are critical to ensure that both recent experiences in the Middle East as well as historical lessons learned are effectively leveraged and applied in the current fight. As our senior military and civilian leaders develop strategies to continue the Nation's GWOT efforts, expeditious consideration of new and innovative approaches are paramount in achieving fundamental changes and adaptations necessary to improve effectiveness in defeating those challenges associated with Irregular Warfare.

National Policy and Proposed Definitions

Irregular warfare is the oldest form of warfare, and it is a phenomenon that goes by many names, including tribal warfare, primitive warfare, "little wars," and low-intensity conflict.

- Jeffrey B. White³

In the shadow of the tragedies of September 11, 2001, Irregular Warfare has emerged as a common catch phrase underpinning a wide range of warfare that continues to threaten the United States' national and even global security. A common theme that keeps surfacing from many senior civilian and military leader forums is the need to address the myriad of challenges associated with this new form of warfare. Although it has gained much attention and debate among our most senior leaders, a widely accepted and promulgated definition and understanding of Irregular Warfare remains unclear. This section reviews existing strategic policy and the efforts of several prominent organizations and forums in their examination of Irregular Warfare as they pursue a widely accepted draft definition. Some have taken even a closer look at what Irregular Warfare means in order to provide greater understanding for the warfighter and for those that have to make policy to support senior leaders' intent.

The current administration clearly recognizes the need to better posture for a broader array of challenges and missions associated with on-going operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that are frequently referred to as Irregular Warfare. The National Security Council's "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq" reinforces a collaborative interagency effort to "carry out a campaign to defeat the terrorists and neutralize the insurgency, developing Iraqi security forces, and helping the Iraqi government..."⁴ Irregular Warfare is also mentioned in general terms in the current National Security Strategy (NSS) as it addresses combating the new deadly challenges that have emerged from rogue states and terrorists that are characteristics in most interpretations of Irregular Warfare.⁵ Further, specific emphasis is placed on rogue states' use of terrorism and insurgency as a means to achieve their goals.

Similarly, Irregular Warfare is alluded to in both the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and National Military Strategy (NMS). The 2005 NDS frames Irregular Warfare in the context of "irregular challenges" including "unconventional and sophisticated irregular methods, terrorism and insurgency...to erode United States influence, patience, and political will."⁶ However, the NDS falls short of describing Irregular Warfare and associated challenges as anything more than defeating terrorism and insurgency. However, it clearly acknowledges the importance to address irregular challenges through multiple appropriate elements of national power.

Despite a broad definition, the NDS specifically calls for the need to retain and improve capabilities to prevent attacks against the United States. As technologies advance and information sharing becomes even more prevalent irregular challenges will encompass innovative and sophisticated threats. These threats are generally posed by “terrorists, criminals, and insurgents...and states that are unable, and in some cases unwilling, to exercise effective control over their territory or frontiers, thus leaving areas open to hostile exploitation...aimed to erode United States influence, patience, and political will.”⁷ In short, these “irregular challenges come from those employing unconventional methods to counter the traditional advantages of stronger opponents.”⁸ Although the NDS is more specific than the NSS, it is still too broad in illuminating the full realm of what is thought to encompass Irregular Warfare.

Similarly, in support of the NSS as the implementation document of the NDS, the 2004 NMS not only mirrors the NDS concept of irregular challenges, but also brings more specificity to the notion of Irregular Warfare. However, in articulating its three national military objectives (protecting the US against external aggression; preventing conflict and surprise attack; and prevailing against adversaries) Irregular Warfare characteristics are scattered throughout – engaging terrorist forces, denying safe havens, promoting security, post-conflict operations and counterterrorism. While these national policy documents appear somewhat synchronized regarding Irregular Warfare, a more refined definition is necessary to clearly illuminate authorities, responsibilities and overarching national policy.

In the context of strategic policy, a number of different organizations within DoD are pursuing solutions to the challenges posed by Irregular Warfare. Specifically, to further address this issue, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD (P)) is currently working on a draft “DoD Capabilities for Irregular Warfare” directive, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) has hosted several general officer level Irregular Warfare Conferences, and the Army is even integrating Irregular Warfare challenges into its robust senior level exercises. However, despite these and many other efforts, there remains a void of an approved and promulgated definition and understanding of Irregular Warfare beyond the broad overarching strategic policy outlined previously. This shortfall further contributes to a common misunderstanding of all that Irregular Warfare encompasses and the implications therein. The three most prominent definitions provided by the organizations just mentioned will now be reviewed.

The USD (P) has been instrumental in advancing an approved DoD definition of Irregular Warfare, leveraging both Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD SO/LIC) and QDR Irregular Warfare working group efforts, albeit not promulgated to date. However the USD (P) Draft DoD Directive, “DoD Capabilities for Irregular

Warfare,” provides the following definition: “Warfare that seeks to erode an adversary’s power and will primarily by applying or countering indirect, non-traditional means.”⁹ It further attempts to codify this definition by listing the following “types of operations or activities that comprise Irregular Warfare: Insurgency/Counterinsurgency; Unconventional Warfare; Terrorism/Counterterrorism; Foreign Internal Defense; Stability Operations; Psychological Operations; Civil Military Operations; Information Operations; and finally Intelligence/Counterintelligence Operations.”¹⁰ While the definition, and associated components, appears clear and concise there aren’t any distinguishable characteristics that separate it from the operations and activities that are routinely conducted by the United States military such as those enumerated therein.

The USMC has also been working diligently to provide a draft definition of Irregular Warfare and to address the associated challenges. During the recent Irregular Warfare II Conference hosted by the Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, Virginia in July 2005, an assembled group of distinguished subject matter experts from the military, academia and various corporate institutions drafted the following definition of Irregular Warfare: “Conflict in which some or all forces engaged (on any side) do not belong to the regular forces of legally-constituted states, or employ non-traditional methods.”¹¹ Additionally, various panels at the conference listed features of Irregular Warfare such as: “tribal affiliations, based on kinships, networks of exchange and information, and communal grievances.”¹² The conference report suggests that Irregular Warfare is also thought to range from operations in counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counter proliferation, to stability and reconstruction. These are forms of warfare and operations common in military lexicon and have extensive doctrine published to guide in their application.

A third draft definition offered by the United States Army’s Futures Center closely mirrors the USD (P) Draft “DoD Capabilities for Irregular Warfare” directive. It states that: “Irregular Warfare is the broad spectrum of operations and activities waged by, against, or in support of state or non-state entities to achieve a political goal or objective, by applying or countering indirect, non-traditional means.”¹³ There is a distinct relationship between this, national policy, and the draft USD (P) language. The broad spectrum of operations and activities connotes a similar concern and difficulties associated with specificity on the categorization of Irregular Warfare.

Irregular Warfare has emerged as a concern for many of our most senior civilian and military leaders. As outlined in numerous national policy documents, the global threat of today and for the unforeseeable future is very unfamiliar and admittedly sometimes incomprehensible.

The DoD, military Services, partnering with academia and the civilian community, are engaged in finding solutions to the many challenges associated with Irregular Warfare. But it remains unclear from the definitions provided thus far as to whether this new form of warfare is such an aberration from past understanding, or simply an extension and adaptation of existing operations and activities. That the latter is the case will be proposed in the following sections.

Assessment of Perspective

The specific definitions provided by OSD and the Services in actuality appear very broad in nature, but at least have served to advance ideas and conceptualization of a seemingly vague and misunderstood topic. Irregular Warfare is complex, as the world's most senior analyst and academia have discovered in their efforts to date. Although the complexities are boundless and appear to compound over time, there is a common thread of understanding – they all infer a change in how the enemy fights and that we must adapt our warfighting mentalities accordingly. This section explores the definitions provided thus far in greater detail to illuminate commonalities of understanding, intentionally avoiding an exhaustive assessment.

Characteristics associated with Irregular Warfare according to OSD's draft wording go into great detail to ensure proper context and understanding. Unfortunately, the multitude of possible applications of "what is" and "what is not" in the purview and scope of this definition leads the discussion back to one of great familiarity. In fact, the majority of the operations and activities that comprise Irregular Warfare according to the draft "DoD Capabilities for Irregular Warfare" directive, though not an exhaustive listing, are clearly spelled out and defined in Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,¹⁴ and respective Service doctrine. While there is an acknowledgement and understanding of other more specific characteristics, such as "the use of indirect or non-traditional means...use of surrogates, indigenous, foreign or civilian personnel...and the likelihood of violation of international law,"¹⁵ these characteristics don't advance a clear distinction from other traditional forms of military operations or activities.

Efforts in the United States Army's Futures Center have also considered the more traditional forms of operations such as those listed in the draft DoD directive as part of Irregular Warfare. However, their efforts extend to a more hypothetical and conceptual setting to explore the realm of possibility. Understanding that it is difficult to define, the Futures Center offers the notion of an inadequacy of the full "Spectrum of Conflict" typically considered as ranging from traditional conventionally focused major combat operations to complex small scale contingencies. Admittedly, Irregular Warfare is extremely difficult to define, but is certainly "a

difference in kind from conventional warfare” according to subject matter experts at the Futures Center. Further, their understanding and definition specifically draws on an application of the elements of national power to illuminate the threat. But, ultimately the discussion circuitously ends up in a familiar context.

In addition to these efforts, the United States Special Operations Command and ASD SO/LIC hosted an Irregular Warfare Workshop in September 2005 where specifics of what comprise Irregular Warfare were addressed. It is no surprise that the same types of operations and activities identified by DoD and the other Services were categorized within the realm of Irregular Warfare. This categorization included all those outlined in the “DoD Capabilities for Irregular Warfare” directive, and five other activities, such as Attacks on Economic Targets and Computer Network Operations. The group further agreed that “Irregular Warfare is bigger and broader than a set of operations, a set of Techniques, Tactics and Procedures, or a set of capabilities...it is more of a warfighting philosophy that seeks to achieve strategic objectives primarily by using non-traditional means.”¹⁶

There has been much discussion in academia of a new type of warfare called Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW) that is directly linked to Irregular Warfare. A cursory look into this theory reveals very similar and common characteristics with Irregular Warfare. Retired Marine Colonel [Thomas X. Hammes](#), counterinsurgency expert, consultant, doctoral candidate at Oxford, and published author of the highly acclaimed book on 4GW titled *The Sling and the Stone: On War and the 21st Century*, offers an assessment that focuses on not only the elements of national power but also the changes in technology and globalization. The Marine Corps even included 4GW at last summer’s Irregular Warfare II conference as a means to get at a sound definition of Irregular Warfare. “4GW – a construct that argues that warfare has changed in fundamental ways...can be conducted by states or groups, it exploits all available networks, attacks policy makers directly through the media, superior political will is the victory mechanism, conflicts are long term, measured in decades.”¹⁷ These characteristics are not dissimilar to that of Irregular Warfare.

Although the Marine Corps has been noted as having said that “there’s no such thing as Irregular Warfare,”¹⁸ they have exerted an enormous amount of energy and resources to meet the associated challenges. The definition supported at last year’s Irregular Warfare Conference noted unique characteristics, but returned to applying classic historical examples of operations similar to those confronting us today and then sought to “uncover solutions that will empower joint and coalition forces to respond more effectively against unorthodox adversaries.”¹⁹ As with OSD and other organizations that are grappling with Irregular Warfare, traditional forms of

warfare and operations ranging from guerilla warfare to insurgency operations emerged throughout discussions. Simply put, “though Irregular Warfare may force an alteration in course for the United States military, this dimension of combat is hardly new.” United States Marine Corps Lieutenant General James Mattis, Commanding General, Marine Corps Development Command, as with Hammes, reinforces this position by stating that “Irregular war is irregular only to us.”²⁰

All of these organizations, subject matter experts, and associated working groups are struggling to provide a definition of Irregular Warfare that is clear, concise, and unambiguous. It is clear that the general definitions to date are close to meaningless without the association of more traditional forms of warfare, operations or activities. While its purpose seems clear, there is great difficulty in generating a common understanding of something that is already understood and perhaps not so irregular as most want to believe.

Historically, Not So Unfamiliar

Any serious student of history will note that war evolves but will also identify the persistence of so-called irregular threats going back to the bible.²¹

- Frank Hoffman,
Director, Strategic Studies Group,
Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

Since World War II, by one count, there have been more than 80 irregular conflicts. They include civil wars in Rwanda and Somalia, guerrilla wars in Sudan, and rebellions in Chechnya; they involve irregular elements fighting against other irregular elements, regular forces of a central government, or an external intervention force.²²

- Jeffrey B. White,
Defense Intelligence Agency.

The USD (P) draft definition of Irregular Warfare, coupled with all that it is professed to encompass is hardly unfamiliar to our Army, let alone the rest of the military Services. It's clear from the joint doctrinal definitions of insurgency, counterinsurgency, terrorism, counter terrorism and irregular forces, to name a few, that Irregular Warfare isn't really so irregular. If a new phrase is to be coined for these operations or warfare, there must be a clear and prominent distinction from existing types or forms of operations and activities to illustrate the differences. Arguably, Irregular Warfare has evolved as the result of the enemies' initiative in taking advantage of huge technological advancements and globalization. But, this does not necessarily merit distinction as a new form of warfare, and perhaps is more appropriate only as an adaptation of existing warfighting capabilities and mentality. This section provides a

snapshot of historical vignettes that reinforce that the definitions and meanings of today's Irregular Warfare is "the oldest form of warfare that goes by many names..."²³

The United States military has a long history and much experience in fighting irregular forces in situations in which adaptation was imperative to confront an unfamiliar threat. Obviously, some adaptations or approaches to conflict resolution were more effective than others. "The United States Army had considerable historical experience with irregular warfare in the 19th century, fighting against a variety of irregular Indian groups from Florida to the Pacific coast, confronting guerrillas associated in one way or another with more regular forces in Mexico and in the Civil War against Confederate raiders, and at the century's end fighting a frustrating colonial war against Filipino revolutionaries."²⁴ In addition, the Philippine-American and Vietnam Wars stand out as two prominent examples of operations on either end of the spectrum that bring the notion of a new form of warfare aimed at irregular forces to a grinding halt.

The United States engagement in the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century is best characterized as the use of irregular forces to conduct guerrilla warfare and insurgency. It is not difficult to draw commonalities of specific tactics and approaches employed by the enemy in the Philippines. Coincidentally, some of the very same arguments on how to suppress or defeat the enemy through the balance and application of the elements of national power existed then. But pacification and other means could not negate the threat posed by the enemy, a threat which has even been referred to as terrorism. The accounts of massacres of American soldiers on the island of Samar and the post-conflict commitment of Filipino guerrillas to continue the fight clearly parallel characteristics of today's global terrorist threat.²⁵ Finally, an interesting perspective on how much importance the Philippine-American War possesses in relation to our current challenges is the fact that the threat model used by United States Special Operations Command today is the same as used for the Philippine insurrection.

The next most prominent historical example of irregular warfare for the United States after operations in the Philippines occurred over 50 years later in Vietnam. The nature of the war in Vietnam was not dissimilar to that espoused in DoD's draft "Capabilities for Irregular Warfare" directive – indirect engagement, affect the will of the opponent beyond its military, and to target the decision making process of national leadership are just a few commonalities. Ultimately categorized as a "people's or revolutionary war,"²⁶ the war in Vietnam was arguably a war of insurgency and Guerilla Warfare. Further, during the United States' involvement great emphasis was placed on defeating United States forces through the will of the people and guerilla warfare was clearly evident.

COL (Retired) Hammes, in the construction of his argument for 4GW, found that the “evolution of insurgency is best described through the experiences of Vietnam, Nicaragua and the Palestine.”²⁷ With Vietnam the focus of this discussion as contrasted with today’s Irregular Warfare, the characteristics of the threat and the associated challenges are negligible. Much like the threat of today, the enemy didn’t have to specifically defeat a military force to attain success on such a complex battlefield. Ho Chi Minh understood this and “using the tools of fourth generation, tactics, he defeated the much more powerful United States because the United States never understood the kind of war it was fighting.”²⁸

Although the employment of Irregular Warfare by irregular forces against the United States is most evident in the Philippine-American and Vietnam wars, these type of operations and activities date even further back in our nation’s rich history, to events of the American Civil War and earlier. History appears to be in the process of repeating itself as we move further into the 21st century. It’s not too late to heed the warnings of the assembled subject matter experts at Marine Corps’ 2004 Irregular Warfare II Conference who provided some key insights for senior civilian and military leaders in their approach to Irregular Warfare:

We need to better exploit history and avoid the “sine wave” phenomenon of interest in irregular operations. There are new elements in today’s security environment, but not as much as some theorists have posited. We need to relearn what has been done in the past, understand what methods were tried to resolve insurgencies, and which worked and didn’t in what circumstances so that we can apply effective techniques in the appropriate context. These insights then must be institutionalized in our training and education system, not just put aside to be relearned by the next generation.²⁹

Regardless of historical reference, it stands true today, as we face the many challenges, including irregular challenges associated with the current threat and on-going operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that we must adapt. Learning from what has already been learned will make adapting all that much easier and less costly.

Focused Approach

It is clear from guidance provided by senior civilian and military leadership, the ever present organizational change, and wealth of information currently addressing this issue that the United States is committed to defeating the threat and irregular challenges associated with Irregular Warfare. President Bush’s message from his 2005 State of the Union address of “Making America Safer with Decisive Action to Win the War on Terror and Spread Freedom”³⁰ is being fully supported and carried out by civilian and military leaders alike. However, to sustain this momentum and commitment, senior leaders must continue to provide emphasis,

support, and clear guidance to address these challenges. It is equally important to leverage the excellent work of the Services and their subject matter expert working groups to provide and promulgate a coherent approach to Irregular Warfare that also must be reflected in existing doctrine. This section provides the author's and institutional recommendations and considerations designed to overcome the myriad of challenges associated with today's threat.

The continuous update of national policy, whether through a State of the Union address by the President or announcement of a National Strategy for Victory in Iraq by the National Command Authority, is critical to ensure continued emphasis, support, and promulgation of strategic level guidance to address existing threats. Continued engagement of civilian and military leadership is essential in focusing efforts to collectively achieve a better understanding of the threat and what is required to defeat it. The Department of State, the Office of Homeland Defense, and DoD must all provide a collaborative team effort to shape and reinforce a true interagency approach to defeat global terrorism and neutralize the Iraqi insurgency and instability in Afghanistan. An excellent opportunity presents itself with the on-going QDR process. Already, much emphasis has been placed on this year's review to ensure that necessary requirements, risks, and capabilities related to the emerging irregular challenges are taken into account. As findings are released, Irregular Warfare must be clearly codified and understood for the Services to effectively craft a coherent approach to defeating the threat. This provides an unprecedented opportunity for senior leadership to capture the attention and focus of all concerned agencies.

In addition to QDR, senior Service generals, like Army Chief of Staff, General Peter J. Schoomaker, routinely acknowledge the need to advance the United States military's warfighting capabilities and change the conventional mentality of how to fight to meet irregular challenges. This is clearly reflected in the United States Army through various institutional efforts such as mental agility, cross-cultural competency development and incorporation of relevant and realistic threats into robust exercises and scenarios. Likewise, Lieutenant General Mattis has stated that he understands that the United States Marine Corps cannot expect to rely solely on the 1940 "Small Wars Manual" and must remain engaged to "learn to adapt and evolve on the move to better prosecute a war bereft of traditional boundaries."³¹ This awareness and concern by senior leaders, together with sound guidance and decision-making, especially in the midst of the QDR, will ensure the force is sufficiently prepared to meet these challenges today and well into the future.

Notably, the United States Army and Marine Corps have provided numerous recommendations as to how to overcome irregular challenges and prevail in an irregular warfare

environment. In the Army Futures Center's draft white paper titled "The Generating Force for the Army in Joint Operations: 2015-2024," addendum to the Army's Capstone Concept, places the future strategic environment in context. More importantly, the document outlines actions for the Army's generating force to improve its capability to adapt to significant, unanticipated changes in this new and ever-changing warfighting environment. "We must educate leaders and Soldiers both in the challenges of insurgency and the historical methods used to defeat them. Defeating irregular challenges further requires the creation of stable, self-sustaining institutions across all domains of conflict to enable the emergence of a just and lasting society, even in the face of violence."³² Again, Irregular Warfare is viewed through the lens and application of history and existing forms of warfare (e.g. use of *insurgency* in this reference).

The Irregular [Warfare II Conference](#) hosted by the United States Marine Corps in [July 2005](#) provided numerous recommendations on Irregular Warfare, from some of the most senior and well versed experts in the United States and from abroad. Specific solutions ranged from: understanding cultures; rethinking how we link national aims to both military and interagency planning; bolstering non-military instruments of power; and improving our ability to integrate these capabilities at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.³³ Additionally, the United States does not have to address these challenges in isolation. The United Kingdom and other allies have a wealth of historical knowledge and experience with this type of threat that the United States must leverage. Specifically, the United Kingdom is in the process of publishing a Joint Concept for Countering Disorder, Insurgency, Criminality, and Terrorism: the United Kingdom Contribution. We must take advantage of this document and all others that may be helpful in addressing these emerging challenges. It is equally important for the United States to harness the historical knowledge, expertise, and experiences of our coalition partners who contribute to creating such invaluable documents.

However, the greatest challenge remains - to get both of our civilian and military communities to realize that Irregular Warfare, as it is currently defined, is not so irregular. Once that is understood, modification and adaptation of existing doctrine must be embraced. There already exists an abundance of current United States doctrinal references, from the joint community to the individual Services, which offer guidance to defeat irregular threats. Joint doctrine contains a series of specific doctrine under the heading of "Military Operations Other Than War" that provides guidance on Irregular Warfare type operations and activities. The United States Marine Corps' *Small Wars Manual*, which although nearly 65 years old, continues to be a valid baseline requiring only refinement in order to be relevant in the present day. And

the Army's "How to Fight" manuals remain relevant for application of operations associated with this newly emerging form of warfare.

The enemy has adapted his methodologies of how he fights, but is definitely not conducting a new revolutionary type of warfare; as we must understand that history will serve us well if only we heed its lessons. Irregular Warfare is not new and its characteristics align with very familiar forms military operations. Although the enemy has more sophisticated and innovative means to achieve desired effects, we must realize this and incorporate lessons into existing doctrine and how we fight manuals. This is a caution against creating a new form of warfare and focus based on improving proficiencies in types of warfare that are already found in relatively mature doctrine. Finally, it is evident that any new doctrine or policy must be clear, concise, and unambiguous if it is to be effective. Regarding Irregular Warfare, an approved definition and clear scope of the associated challenges that is promulgated DoD or Cabinet-wide is essential and would greatly benefit how our nation approaches this threat.

Conclusion

National policy and the myriad of Department of Defense efforts such as the Quadrennial Defense Review and other subject matter expert working groups are dedicated to ensure the military is strategically poised to adapt to the associated challenges quicker and more effectively than the enemy. As these bodies come to realize that the current warfighting environment is not a new phenomenon, it is evident that they will need to promote merely an adaptation and application of existing methods in order to provide the warfighter with a better understanding of how to defeat the threat. In the meantime, however, it is imperative that senior leaders quickly promulgate a clear and concise definition of Irregular Warfare and an approach to defeat the associated irregular challenges if it is believed that a new form of warfare is warranted.

A quote from an Army White Paper entitled "Adapt or Die" is most appropriate to summarize the best approach to effectively defeat irregular threats: "In the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment we face for the foreseeable future, if we were to choose merely one advantage over our adversaries it would certainly be this: to be superior in the art of learning and adaptation. This is the imperative for a culture of innovation in the United States Army."³⁴ This innovation doesn't necessarily mean creating new phrases or paradigms. In this case, realizing and applying the lessons of history one can easily conclude that Irregular Warfare is perhaps not so irregular.

Endnotes

¹ [Thomas X. Hammes](#), "[The Evolution of War: The Fourth Generation](#)," *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 1994.

² Jen DiMascio, "[QDR Effort Needs to Better Define 'Irregular Warfare,' Durbin says](#)," *Inside the Army*, 10 October 2005, 17.

³ [Jeffrey B. White](#), "[A Different Kind of Threat, Some Thoughts on Irregular Warfare](#)," 1996; available from <http://www.cia.gov/csi/studies/96unclass/irregular.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 November 2005.

⁴ *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, National Security Council, November 2005, 2.

⁵ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 13.

⁶ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington D.C.: United States of America Department of Defense, March 2005), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Douglas J. Feith, *Department of Defense Capabilities for Irregular Warfare, Department of Defense Directive (Draft) Number 3xxx.05*, (Washington D.C.: Undersecretary of Defense for Policy), 2. Non-Traditional Means are means other than traditional forms of combat involving peer-to-peer fighting between the regular armed forces of two or more countries. Quadrennial Defense Review definition of Irregular Warfare from August 2005: Irregular Warfare is conflict in which some or all forces engaged (on any side) do not belong to the regular forces of legally constituted states, and/or employ non-traditional methods.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ Randy Gangle, "Irregular Warfare II Conference Report, Creating Stability in an Unstable World," General Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, 11-12 July 2005), 11.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Bob Johnson, e-mail message to author, 1 December 2005. Irregular Challenges are described as "increasingly sophisticated irregular methods e.g., terrorism and insurgency that challenge U.S. security interests. Adversaries employing irregular methods aim to erode U.S. influence, patience, and political will. Irregular opponents often take a long term approach, attempting to impose prohibitive human, material, financial, and political costs on the United States to compel strategic retreat from a key region or course of action."

¹⁴ Joint Publication 1-02, "Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 12 August 2005, available from <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jpreferencepubs.htm>; Internet accessed 10 November 2005.

Insurgency: (DOD, NATO) An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.

Counterinsurgency: (DOD) Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency. Also called COIN.

Terrorism: (DOD) The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. See also antiterrorism; combating terrorism; counterterrorism; force protection condition; terrorist; terrorist groups.

Counterterrorism: (DOD) Operations that include the offensive measures taken to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism. Also called CT. See also antiterrorism; combating terrorism; terrorism.

Irregular forces: (DOD) Armed individuals or groups who are not members of the regular armed forces, police, or other internal security forces.

¹⁵ Feith, 2.

¹⁶ United States Marine Corps Small Wars Center of Excellence, "[Summary of Irregular Warfare Workshop](http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/search/articles/SummaryofIrregularWarfareWorkshop.pdf)," 20 Sep 2005; available from <http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/search/articles/SummaryofIrregularWarfareWorkshop.pdf>; Internet; accessed 3 November 2005.

¹⁷ Gangle, 11.

¹⁸ United States Marine Corps Small Wars Center of Excellence, 2.

¹⁹ *States News Service*, "Marine Corps Combat Development Center Host Warfare Conference," 14 July 2005; available from http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=c6917c2e32e279ed21ed21e475232821185; Internet; accessed 10 November 2005.

²⁰ Elaine M. Grossman, "Marine General: Ground Force 'Triad' is Key in Irregular Warfare," *Inside the Pentagon*, 25 August 2005, 21.

²¹ *States News Service*.

²² [White](#), 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁴ [The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare © John M. Gates. The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio](#), Chapter Two, p1.

²⁵ John M. Gates, [The U.S. Army and Irregular Warfare](#). (Ohio: [The College of Wooster](#), n.d.), chapter 3, 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, chapter 8, 10.

²⁷ [Hammes](#), 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Gangle, 3.

³⁰ George W. Bush, *Presidential State of the Union Address*, (Washington D.C.: The White House, February 2005); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2005/index.html#4>; Internet; accessed 2 February 2005. Since September 11, 2001, President Bush has taken unprecedented actions to protect all Americans, including creating the Department of Homeland Security, focusing the FBI on preventing terrorism, reforming our intelligence agencies, expanding research on biological and chemical defense, and improving border security.

³¹ *States News Service*.

³² Ricky Smith, "White Paper Coordinating Draft, The Generating Force for the Army in Joint Operations: 2015-2024; An Addendum to the Capstone Concept," Futures Center (Forward), 1 August 2005, 10.

³³ Gangle, 4, 22.

³⁴ David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson, "Adapt or Die, The Imperative for a Culture of Innovation in the United States Army," May 2004, 2.