CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 33 / PCEMI 33

MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES RESEARCH PAPER

Failed Revolutions: A Requiem for the American Way of War

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Abstract

This paper proposes that both the American way of war and its major enabler, the revolution in military affairs (RMA), have been rendered largely ineffective when applied against irregular, insurgent warfare. It theorizes that this situation has arisen as a result of a contextually specific interpretation of a military revolution (MR). This interpretation similarly constrained the United States' reformulated way of war. The context, that of high-intensity conventional warfare, has little in common with the current and likely future threat and, resultantly, the United States now faces the prospect that even if fully developed the RMA will be of vastly less utility than was originally conceived.

> *First*, therefore, it is clear that war should never be thought of as *something autonomous* but always as an *instrument of policy*; otherwise the entire history of war would contradict us. Only this approach will enable us to penetrate the problem intelligently. *Second*, this way of looking at it will show us how wars must vary with the nature of their motives and of the situations which give rise to them.
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> The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking, neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.[1]

Introduction

Upon the heels of the First Gulf War came a plethora of military writing concerning an all but arrived revolution in military affairs (RMA).[2] Essentially, this revolution foresaw the fusion of a great number of advancements including long range precision munitions, sophisticated networked information technologies, new doctrines and advanced organizational concepts. It not only envisioned the continued supremacy of the United States military in the realm of pure warfighting, but also in a host of other endeavours.

It was not long after its victory in the Gulf, however, that the United States found itself, in 1994, hastily removing its soldiers from Somalia. This withdrawal took place after the deployed American force suffered several casualties during an attempt to take prisoner a number of high-ranking clansmen associated with the ruling warlord General Mohamed Farrah Aidid.[3] At the time, no one seemed to have remarked upon the relationship between the promises of the RMA and what could conceivably have been characterized as a strategic loss at the hands of a lesser opponent.

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[1] Michael Howard and Peter Paret ed. *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88.

[2] For an overview of the history and context of scholarly writing concerning the RMA post 1991, please see, for example: Project on Defense Alternatives. "The RMA Debate," http://www.comw.org/rma/fulltext/history.html; Internet; accessed 2 Feb 2007.

[3] Mark Bowden, "Blackhawk Down: An American War Story," http://inquirer.philly.com/packages/somalia/nov16/default16.asp; Internet; accessed 10 April 2007.

Regardless, there was no abatement in either the discourse on, or the advantages promised by the RMA. Indeed, in 1997, with the publication of Joint Vision 2010, the pursuit of the RMA became policy. Subsequent keystone documents, though modifying terminology, also served to enshrine this goal. Moreover, the United States was joined in its pursuit by a number of similarly inclined Western allies.

Providing the lead within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) campaign to remove Serbian forces from Kosovo in 1999, the United States again proved the value of the revolutionary technology witnessed nearly a decade earlier. Within this conflict the American conception of the RMA appeared to have greatly matured. Here, the adherence to revised doctrine within the air campaign, arguably, allowed the Alliance to strike directly at the Serbian center of gravity and, thereby, forced Slobodan Milosevic to cede control of the contested area.[4]

Following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001, the United States declared war both upon Al Qaeda, as the organization directly responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan which harboured them. Once more, the world witnessed, initially, the virtual routing of these enemies in a remarkably short period. However, the United States, among other nations, remains directly engaged against the Taliban some five years on.

Similarly, under the precept of the greater 'War on Terror', the United States undertook the invasion of Iraq in 2003 with the express purpose of removing Saddam Hussein from power. Much like their first encounter with Iraqi forces, the defeat of this enemy and subsequent toppling of the regime took place in an equally impressive timeframe but with considerably less

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[4] Richard Pereira. "Kosovo: Air Power – The Decisive Factor?", Journal of The Singapore Armed Forces, Vol. 27, No. 1, (Jan – Mar 2001) [journal on line]; available from http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2001/Vol27_1/4.htm; Internet; accessed 10 April 2007.

manpower. However, not long after the liberation, the United States found itself caught in conflict with an irregular enemy and remains so to the present day. In all of this, one is left to wonder how it is that the world's most powerful military, one which is actively pursuing an RMA and currently possesses technology of a type which is superior by orders of magnitude to that of its several opponents, can meet with such mixed success.

The answer is that a number of 'other-than-military' factors that culminated to produce a military revolution (MR) and a consequent reformulation of the American way of war have been interpreted in a fatally narrow, contextually specific, manner. This context, unfortunately, has little in common with the current, and likely future threat. Resultantly, both the American way of war and its major enabler, the RMA, have been rendered largely ineffective. Indeed, the United States now faces the prospect that, even if fully developed, the RMA will prove itself to be of vastly less utility than was originally conceived.

In seeking to explain the depth of the problem facing the United States, this paper will first examine the nature of RMAs and MRs generally. Thereafter, the current RMA, as conceived of by the United States, will be discussed. Following logically, an examination of the major 'other-than-military' factors, those that led to the MR, and the resulting re-conceptualized American way of war will be undertaken. Herein it will be demonstrated that because of the context in which the MR was interpreted, both the American way of war and the RMA are confined to utility within a similar context.

Drawing upon Iraq as an example, this paper will undertake an analysis of the contemporary threat facing the United States in a manner similar to the examination of the MR. The purpose here is twofold. Primarily the analysis will reveal the predisposition of the United States to view potential threats, however inappropriately, in a manner that conforms to its

preferred method of warfare. It will also highlight the fact that potential American adversaries are aware of this bias and, having little recourse, are predisposed to irregular, insurgent warfare.

The insurgent way of war will then be discussed with the intent of setting the conditions for its comparison to the American way. Comparing directly the various characteristics of the two styles will serve to underscore the dissimilarities and, consequently the American shortcomings. Ultimately, it will be shown that the American way of war, and its facilitation through the RMA, is all but negated by that of the insurgent way. Finally, this paper will conclude that the United States will necessarily be faced with unenviable decisions in seeking to resolve this situation.

Syntax, Semantics and Settings – What is the RMA?

Although in the time following the Cold War there has been much scholarly discussion of RMAs, the notion was first put forward in the 1980s by the, then, Chief of The Soviet General Staff, Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.[5] Through his use of the phrase *military-technical revolution*, he sought to describe the synergistic effect that NATO forces, specifically the Americans, arrayed against the Soviets had achieved. It was his contention that through superior technological advances, NATO could produce with conventional weapons effects similar to those expected from tactical nuclear devices.[6]

Since the enunciation of the idea, however, there has been much debate surrounding it. Though it often appears to be a discussion more concerned with syntax and semantics, the comprehension of the several components central to the discussion are crucial to an understanding of the larger impact both of the concept generally and its current form specifically.

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[5] Elliot A. Cohen. "A Revolution in Warfare" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, Iss. 2 (Mar/Apr 1996): 39.

[6] Ibid., 39.

To this end, it is necessary that a clear distinction be made between *an* RMA, such as has been historically observed, MRs, for their impact and relationship to RMAs, and *the* RMA as it is currently conceived.

An RMA is perhaps best defined as a fundamental discontinuity in the manner in which war is militarily prosecuted.[7] There are three equally important aspects that must necessarily be present in order for an RMA to have occurred: a technological innovation, doctrinal advancement and organizational change.[8] Taken together the fusion of these items are thought to create an increase, by an order of magnitude, of a military's ability to produce combat power.[9] Effectively, this renders any opponent not possessing the revolutionary qualities irrelevant in battle.

Two additional notions are key to a fuller understanding of RMAs generally. Primarily, it is often assumed, in line with Marshal Ogarkov's thesis, that the precipitating factor for an RMA is a technological advancement. While this is often the case, it is not necessarily so. Secondly, the use of the term revolution seems to impart a near instantaneous change. Again, this has not been historically borne out.

Typically, scholars cite a number of prominent examples of technology that have led to RMAs. Innovations such as the longbow, gunpowder, submarines, aircraft, tanks, and so on, are often listed. An examination of the first example of the longbow, or what Andrew Krepinevich

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[7] Andrew Richter. "The Revolution in Military Affairs and its Impact on Canada: The Challenge and the Consequences," *Institute of International Relations, The University of British Columbia*, Working Paper No. 28 (March 1999): 1.

[8] Elinor Sloan. "Canada and the Revolution in Military Affairs: Current Response and Future Opportunities," *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Autumn 2000): 7-8.

[9] Andrew Richter. "The Revolution in Military Affairs and its Impact on Canada: The Challenge and the Consequences"…, 1.

has termed the 'Infantry Revolution', is illustrative of the overall concept of an RMA, its quantum increase in military power and the caution about the speed of its arrival.[10] Likewise, a brief look at the tank will serve to demonstrate that technology is not always a pre-cursor to an RMA.

Technologically, the longbow was revolutionary. Powerful and accurate, it offered a high rate of fire, between eight and ten arrows per minute, as well as the ability to pierce the armor of cavalry and to strike targets at a distance exceeding 200 yards. While it was accepted into use as a military weapon as early as circa 1252, its first mass use in battle was not undertaken until 1298 by King Edward I of England at the battle of Falkirk.[11] The successful mass application of this weapon led to its rapid adoption within the armies of England. Notwithstanding the advantage that the technology of the longbow allowed for, the components necessary to complete this RMA continued to evolve. Subsequent monarchs continued the trend but began fielding archers at the expense of cavalry and adapting both strategy and tactics to take advantage of the capabilities of the longbow. Exemplary of the eventual dominance of this weapon within English warfare was the average weighting of between thirty and ninety percent of the fielded armies in favor of archers.[12] This, however, took place over some two hundred years. Arguably, the RMA precipitated by the longbow did not end until the introduction of cannons circa 1450.

As a counterpoint to the example of the "Infantry Revolution" is the World War II era RMA of combined air/land battle. Though the advent of the tank is often heralded as the

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[10] Elinor Sloan. *The Revolution in Military Affairs: Implications for Canada and NATO* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 21.

[11] Archers of Ravenwood, "A Short History of the English Longbow," http://www.archers.org/default.asp?section=History&page=longbow; Internet; accessed 3 January 2007.

[12] Ibid.

precursor to this RMA, in reality this does not bear out. In fact, the tank, introduced into warfare in the latter stages of World War I, may also be viewed as simply evolutionary technology. That is to say that it is essentially only a self-propelled gun. The impetus for the combined air/land RMA lay less in any one piece of technology than in the requirement, by a re-arming and territorially focused Germany, to free itself from the static warfare that had proven so costly in the previous war. To that end, it was Heinz Guderian's doctrine of mobile, all-arms, joint warfare, popularly known as blitzkrieg, which was the driving factor.[13] In this respect the tank served as but one piece of the mobility and firepower puzzle. Equally important, though also incidental, were other various aspects of mechanization and aviation:

> The Germans had fewer (and in some respects inferior) tanks in 1940 than the British and French. They succeeded not because of material superiority but because they got several things right – supporting technologies such as tank radios, organization, operational concepts, and a proper climate or culture of command.[14]

In sum, while the technological aspects of this RMA were all earlier present to varying degrees, it was the doctrinal formulation of blitzkrieg that truly facilitated it.

From the above discussion, it should be apparent that, no matter the impetus for any particular RMA, the net result is the same. That is, through the adoption of an RMA, be it conscious and organized or otherwise, a military force gains a significant advantage relative to those which have not. Moreover, any RMA has served to change the manner in which a given war has been fought.

Overarching RMAs are a second type of phenomenon known as military revolutions (MR). The key feature of an MR is that these types of revolutions do not simply change the way

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[13] Achtung Panzer, "The Concept of Blitzkrieg," http://www.achtungpanzer.com/blitz.htm; Internet; accessed 4 January 2007.

[14] Elliot A. Cohen. "A Revolution in Warfare"…, 46.

in which war is fought but, rather, they change the way war is conceived of militarily, socially and politically.[15]

The notion of the MR is chiefly championed by the noted futurists Alvin and Heidi Toffler. Several other 'RMA scholars' have also made use of this notion albeit with differing relationships to RMAs. In their work *War and Anti-War*, the Tofflers theorize that any given RMA is simply a sub-set of a greater MR. More pointedly, it is their contention that MRs result from factors purely outside of an armed force and, accordingly revolutionary changes occur within a military to reflect the external realities. [16] For the Tofflers, war is an expression of the manner in which society chiefly derives its living. Thus, they have identified two definitive military revolutions: the agricultural and the industrial.[17]

In the former, the primary means of amassing wealth occurred through agriculture. The populous made a living through working the land and status was attributable to its ownership. War, therefore, sought to wrest greater amounts of land or, at least, to prevent its loss to an enemy. Likewise, armed forces were raised, paid for and controlled by those who owned land. Warfare, as a reflection of agrarian society, was chiefly conducted in a hand-to-hand fashion.[18]

With the Industrial Revolution came a similar military revolution. In civil society, the manner of producing wealth had moved to mass production. This notion of mass also pervaded the thinking of militaries. For the Tofflers, this equates directly to the bureaucratization of armed forces, the industrialized production of arms and destruction on a massive scale.

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[15] Elinor Sloan. *The Revolution in Military Affairs: Implications for Canada and NATO*…, 19.

[16] Alvin Toffler and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 29.

[17] Ibid., 29-30.

[18] Ibid., 33-37.

Moreover, it serves to explain the 'sub-revolutions' of the *levee en masse*, large-scale and long-range logistics, mechanization and so on.[19]

In a similar vein, Andrew Latham's work *Warfare Transformed: A Braudelian Perspective on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs'* arrives at much the same conclusion albeit from a different approach. Latham chooses to analyze current revolutionary changes in warfare from a Braudelian model. Accordingly, he focuses on three distinct time-relative points of view: A short-time perspective (herein focusing upon the major changes in modern warfighting); a conjunctural perspective (examining societies' effect on the manner in which wars are prosecuted); and the *longue duree*, or long-time, perspective (focusing upon long-term transformational trends).[20] Through the discussion of the various historical points of view, Latham seeks to demonstrate that the current RMA is a result of fundamental changes in factors which influence the conduct of war but are external to the military per se.[21] One may equally infer similar conclusions about other RMAs.

In opposition to such views are RMA scholars such as Williamson Murray and Clifford Rogers. While both seem to agree that MRs exist as phenomena greater than individual RMAs and that MRs serve to change the conception of war, they differ in their hypothesis of cause and effect. Simply put, for Murray and Rogers, the occurrence of an MR is the result of an RMA so significant that it serves to bring together factors external to the military and, therefore, impacts

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[19] Ibid., 38-43.

[20] Andrew Latham, "Warfare Transformed: A Braudelian Perspective on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs'," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 8, Iss. 2 (2002): 231-266.

[21] Ibid., 261.

directly upon society and the state.[22] Again, the net effect is a fundamental change in the manner in which war is conceived.

The scholarly debate surrounding military revolutions has a circular quality about it. While either of the above theories of MRs and their associated relationship with RMAs are possible, it would seem, on balance, that views consistent with those of the Tofflers or Latham are more likely for at least two reasons.

First, it has been noted that historical changes in the ways in which individual states fight wars often yield consistently similar results despite different contextual factors. Exemplary of this, as Deborah Avant points out, the RMA of the *levee en masse*, which equated to the large-scale participation of French citizenry in the nation's army resulted from France's interpretation of the culmination of the many 'other-than military' variables which confronted it.[23] Both the Prussian and British Armies, France's enemies of the time, although having observed France's success, perceived the variables differently. As a result, although these militaries eventually accepted the notion of citizen armies, they did so at different times and for different reasons.[24]

Second, when one considers the issue of MR/RMA cause and effect in the context of modern, western, democratic society, the notion that an RMA could cause an MR seems counterintuitive. Civil control of the military, market economies and various other societal pressures would seem to offer greater potential for impact upon a state's military than an RMA would have on these several variables. Plainly put, it is hard to conceive of a situation, at present, where an RMA would spawn a MR.

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[22] Elinor Sloan. *The Revolution in Military Affairs: Implications for Canada and NATO*…, 22-23.

[23] Deborah Avant. "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War," *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Winter 2000): 41-72.

[24] Ibid., 41-72.

Whether MRs truly equate to a society's means of deriving wealth or the confluence of a number of fundamentally altered variables, any one of which may provide the overreaching impetus, is best left to future debate. What is important is the general agreement that factors other than the strictly military can culminate to produce an MR that forces an RMA. This view is all the more pertinent when one looks at the present RMA.

The United States, among others, is currently pursuing an RMA, hereafter referred to as *the* RMA, based upon the technical innovation of electronic computing or information systems. To the casual observer of recent military campaigns and the associated weaponry, it may appear that the RMA has already taken place. Beginning throughout the Desert Shield/Storm campaigns of 1990-1991, the use of precision munitions was highlighted daily. Indeed, the first glimpse of modern warfighting for the viewing public was through the graphic footage from the optics of guided weapons. Having quickly gained air superiority, if not supremacy, over the entirety of the area of coalition operations, the United States was able to strike Iraqi forces virtually at will. The outcome of the ground campaign, lasting a mere one-hundred hours, was, retrospectively, a foregone conclusion. Subsequent combat actions in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and again in Iraq would seem to reinforce similar conceptions. Notwithstanding, what has been observed was more akin to a start point than a culmination.

The RMA presently envisions the synergistic exploitation of three broad computer-enabled advances and a related support concept. Primarily, the RMA seeks to conduct "information led warfare".[25] Under this concept, an armed force will, through the use of a number of means, gain 'information dominance' of an enemy while simultaneously protecting friendly forces from similar exploitation. The anticipated result sees commanders, at all levels,

[25] Mattew Mowthorpe, "The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA): The United Sates, Russian and Chinese Views," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, Vol. 30, Iss. 2 (Summer 2005): 140.

provided with real, or near-real, time information concerning the disposition of all battlefield entities. This, in turn, will dramatically decrease the decision-action cycle of friendly forces and, thereby, render the enemy's actions useless.

The second key aspect of the RMA is the ability to attain weapons superiority through the conduct of precision strikes.[26] Based primarily upon an ever-increasing arsenal of 'smart' weapons, individual targets can be engaged with heightened accuracy over great distances. Such an ability aids the enabled force to increase its own protection by remaining largely removed from the close battle while minimizing the risk of collateral damage within the target area.

The technological aspect of the RMA is completed by the concept of 'dominant maneuver'.[27] Maneuver can be considered as movement combined either with fires or the potential to bring fire to bear. Dominant maneuver, as a component of the RMA, is the logical outcome of the prior two aspects. Essentially, a comprehensive understanding of the enemy and the resultant ability to rapidly make decisions and form plans, combined with the capability to conduct attacks with precision throughout the battlespace, must necessarily allow a force to achieve maneuver without fear of significant interference.

Supporting the United States' conception of the RMA is the premise of "focused logistics".[28] Understanding the possibilities that are offered by the realization of the RMA, a focused, rapidly responsive and flexible system of logistics is envisioned. Also taking advantage of various information systems, focused logistics sets as it goal "the fusion of information, logistics, and transportation technologies to provide rapid crisis response, to track and shift assets

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[26] Ibid., 140.

[27] Ibid., 140.

[28] John M. Shalikasvili, "Joint Vision 2010," [on line] available from http://www.dtic.mil/jv2010/jvpub.htm; Internet; accessed 5 January 2007.

even while enroute, and to deliver tailored logistics packages and sustainment directly at the strategic, operational, and tactical level of operations."[29]

At first glance, much of this appears to be old news. In fact, if one were simply to focus upon the technological aspects, then any misconceptions of the RMA having already arrived would be understandable. Recent American military history has indeed shown us a far advanced level, albeit still somewhat short of the overall goal, of technology. But, what remains noticeably absent from the picture is the necessary organizational change and doctrinal advancement necessary for an RMA to occur.

Historically speaking, the United States has taken organizational steps both to conform with and benefit from the RMA albeit most often without the intent to do so. In 1973, the US Armed Forces ended conscription, opting instead for an all-volunteer army. Resultantly, selective and competitive recruiting, as well as dependable service lengths, allowed for greater depth of training and broader employment. Though often overlooked, the professionalization of the non-commissioned officer corps enabled the timely introduction of increasingly complex military technology.

Additionally, the passing of the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act in 1986 served to pave the way for the integration of the separate resources and respective expertise of the individual Armed Services. Amongst others, the stated goals of the act were several: to create unified combatant commands; to ensure that authority of those commanders was equal to their responsibilities and any assigned tasks; to focus attention upon the need for strategy and contingency planning; to ensure greater resource efficiencies; and to enhance all aspects of joint

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[29] Ibid.

management of policies and operations.[30] In effect, this legislation set the groundwork necessary for the US Armed Forces to proceed with the formulation and integration of joint forces operations.

Most recently, and fully contemplated against the tenets of the RMA, the US military has undertaken a program of re-organization known as transformation. This transformation was initiated in 1997 with the publication of *Joint Vision 2010* wherein the, then, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikasvili, outlined the necessity for the US military to achieve full spectrum dominance and reinforced the joint nature of this endeavor.[31] Subsequent individual service visions were constructed in line with this overall vision. Secretary of Defense William Cohen, in the 1998 Annual Report to the President and Congress, first presented the entirety of the transformed image of the US military.[32] This transformed vision has largely been carried forward by subsequent presidential administrations.

Of note, however, is an institutional change in terminology. Whereas previous documents and guidance had spoken of transformation initiatives intended to bring the US military in line with the technological aspects of the RMA, recent publications, notably the April 2003 Department of Defense *Transformation Planning Guidance*, speak of the pursuit of the

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[30] James R. Locher, "The Goldwater-Nichols Act Tens Year Later: Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols," [on line] available from http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/0513.pdf ; Internet; accessed 5 January 2007.

[31] John M. Shalikasvili, "Joint Vision 2010".

[32] William Cohen, "Report to the President and Congress, 1998," [on line] available from http://www.dod.mil/execsec/adr98/index.html; Internet; accessed 5 January 2007.

RMA and the notion of transformation as one and the same. In other words, Transformation for the United States is now synonymous with the attainment of the RMA.[33]

Also noteworthy, this document clearly delineates the responsibility for doctrinal development at the strategic and operational level. More importantly, it highlights the requirement for doctrinal design and experimentation and sets clear criteria both for the experiments and their evaluation.[34] In this regard the United States has set in place the necessary elements for the advancement of doctrine. Taken in total, this doctrinal advancement completes the final requirement for the theoretical attainment of the RMA. While it is far too early to declare its arrival, it is nonetheless certain that the United States is well on its way to implementing its conception of the RMA.

The question as to whether the United States will ever truly achieve its end state of a fully RMA enabled military, in the manner in which the RMA is presently thought of, is virtually unanswerable. What seems certain, however, is that it will pursue the RMA as far as possible. This is due to two important facts. First, this computer driven, information enabled RMA is merely a sub-revolution within a larger MR. Second, the RMA, even in its less than complete state, is the chief enabler of a new American way of war.

Why an RMA? Why Now?

In order to better understand the current RMA in the American context it is necessary to have an understanding of the specific MR that launched it. As has been previously demonstrated, MRs result from a culmination of factors which are removed from the military.

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[33] Donald Rumsfeld, "Transformation Planning Guidance, United States of America Department of Defense, April 2003," [on line] available from http://72.14.205.104/search?q=cache:tFLupyoy9wkJ:www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_129_Transformation_Planning_Guidance_April_2003_1.pdf+transformation+planning+guidance&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=ca; Internet; accessed 5 January 2007.

While it would not be possible to analyze the entirety of these factors, a detailed look at several of the key ones will be sufficient to illustrate of the changes that facilitated the current MR. To this end, social, political, strategic and geographic factors will be examined as these are deemed to have had the most profound effect. It must be acknowledged that there is some overlap in the material presented within the analysis owing to the necessity, in some cases, to view common events from differing angles.

Acknowledging Clausewitz's adage that war is an extension of politics, it would seem logical to begin the analysis with the political factor. However, owing to the fact that in the Western democratic tradition politics are essentially a reflection of the will of the populace, the social factor will be given primary consideration. Indeed, consideration of the social factor first is also appropriate as it is the social factor which appears to have provided the overarching impetus to this MR. As the MR that has facilitated the current RMA has already taken place, any analysis of its contributing factors must be done in an historical context. While some factors, owing to their relationship with others, took longer to mature, the key aspects of the MR took place in the 1960s and 1970s.

Social Upheaval

The term 'social factor' for the purpose of this discussion denotes the development of trends within a society. These trends become significant when they receive general acceptance by a population, in this case the American population. It is important to note that this factor has two key dimensions. The first encompasses the notion that society has the potential to shape the character of any revolution consistent with the Tofflers' previously discussed thesis.[35] That is to

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Colin S. Gray, "Recognizing and Understanding Revolution Change in Warfare: The Sovereignty of Context," (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), 20.

say that human ingenuity and ideals and the depth to which major innovations or attitudes permeate a society will be key to enabling any MR. Secondly, it is society at large that will influence the political process and, through this process, all other factors necessary to enable a MR. As Colin Gray has noted, the nature of war is essentially constant but views concerning its legitimacy and use are variable.[36]

As a period within American social history, the 1960s and 1970s were climactic. The election of the Kennedy Administration in 1960 and its embrace of human space flight and the advocacy of related technologies arguably served to mark the end of the industrial revolution. It has been noted that the latter part of the industrial revolution created a phenomenon wherein American society, in general, undertook the pursuit of materialistic comforts.[37] The ending of the industrial revolution in this respect is, therefore, of some import.

Because material comforts were increasingly facilitated by technological innovation, a more widespread use, acceptance and pursuit of technology throughout American society was undertaken. Of greater significance, the trend towards material comfort combined with the introduction into the electorate of a generation with no significant memory of either the Second World War or the advent of the Cold War, set the conditions for a population more inclined to national domestic amelioration than foreign matters.[38] These social realities met, during this historical period, with two other related occurrences: the war in Vietnam and a general perception of reduced external threats to the United States.

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[36] Ibid., 32.

[37] Vincent Davis, "Levee en Masse, C'est Fini: The Deterioration of Popular Willingness to Serve," in *New Civil-Military Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), 95.

[38] Bruce M. Russet, "The Revolt of the Masses: Public Opinion on Military Expenditures," in *New Civil-Military Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), 84.

The social impact of the decision to enter into Vietnam and the subsequent decisions concerning the manner of prosecuting this conflict cannot be understated. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the American populace was witness to a steady widening of the war and an increase in American casualties. Lacking both a clear demonstration of threat to the United States and a comprehensive method for achieving victory, it is little wonder that this conflict became increasingly unpopular. Exemplary of this in 1969 was the occurrence for the first time in American history of an anti-military sentiment across the breadth of the population. This trend increased in the following year but was more pronounced with persons of higher education. The implication here was that the 'attentive public', seen as those individuals most likely to participate in the electoral process and active politics, was the most anti-military.[39] Socially, this anti-military sentiment was directly manifested in at least two major behaviours.

Foremost was the active demonstration against the war itself. Between the period 1967 and 1971, Washington D.C. was host to numerous demonstrations which gained both in support and size coincidental with the expansion of the war. At their peak, protest attendance surpassed 250, 000.[40] More poignant was the participation of many influential personalities within the popular culture of the time. Notables such playwright Norman Mailer, poet Robert Lowell and renowned pediatrician Benjamin Spock served not only to advance the anti-war cause but also to bridge the gap between 'counter culture' and mainstream America.

Secondly, and of specific impact to the functioning of the military, was the active avoidance of military service. American society had become adverse to the acceptance of casualties except as was absolutely necessary for the preservation of the state. Whereas before

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[39] Bruce M. Russet, "The Revolt of the Masses: Public Opinion on Military Expenditures"…, 77.

[40] Jeff Leen, "Vietnam Protests: When Worlds Collided," Washington Post, 27 September 1999, A1.

Vietnam the United States was able to fill the ranks of its armed services through normal, albeit draft supplemented, recruiting measures, such efforts proved ineffective during the conflict.[41] This was due, predictably, to the perceived lack of legitimacy of the war in general but was compounded by the previously noted lack of outward focus of the post World War II generation.

By the end of the Vietnam War, there was a general distrust both of the military for its involvement in what was perceived as a largely illegitimate conflict and the politicians that had committed the country to this path. More importantly, however, as Andrew Goodpaster has noted, the societal conclusions were an overall and enduring rejection of the principles that had led them into the international confrontations that characterized this historical period.[42]

Unfortunately, the end of the United States' participation in Vietnam did not bring an end to the 'conflict' within society. Data collected between 1968 and 1973 highlighted that the lack of faith in the institutions of American government doubled during that time period with fully 88 percent of those polled registering a general distrust.[43] This trend was seen again in a 1974 poll which concluded that the majority of the population of the United States believed, at that time, that it was faced with the worst problems in memory.[44]

Recognizing the general malaise of the American people, a shift in the public agenda took place. Typical of such change, Jimmy Carter ran for, and won, the presidency of the United States in 1976, on a platform that focused on the human dimension of politics. His emphasis on the human rights agenda, however, was largely derailed domestically by increased economic

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[41] Vincent Davis, "Levee en Masse, C'est Fini: The Deterioration of Popular Willingness to Serve"…, 89.

[42] Andrew J. Goodpaster and Samuel P. Huntington, Civil-Military Relations (Washington: American Enterprise for Public Policy Research, 1977), 18.

[43] Trevor B. McKrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy since 1974* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 37.

[44] Ibid., 37.

stagnation and internationally by several troubling occurrences. The result, simply, was a continuation and perhaps reinforcement, of the already formed attitudes within society. As testimony to society's perceptions, a 1979 opinion poll revealed a level of public pessimism that eclipsed the levels previously displayed both over the 'Watergate Affair' or the loss in Vietnam.[45]

While an uninformed observer might highlight the 'counter-culture' phenomenon as the most prevalent social aspect of the 1960s and 1970s, this would be an under-representation. It was during these decades that a society, exiting the industrial revolution, and very much disposed to the material betterment of their individual situations, met with the realities of a protracted war of questionable legitimacy. The anti-military sentiment that Vietnam engendered led not only to widespread protest but also to an unwillingness to serve within a widely distrusted military. In sum, society began to reject the principles, and the politicians who espoused them, that had led to the American involvement in South-West Asia. Following the withdrawal from Vietnam, however, the social situation seemed to worsen. Political scandal and a stagnant economy only served to reinforce the attitudes and perceptions of the American public.

Political Responses

The political component of the current MR likely began with the election of President Richard Nixon in 1968. As a factor for consideration, it must be analyzed both from the perspective of US domestic politics and from that of the chief threat to the United States at the time - the Soviet Union. Clearly there is an interrelation between the two views but, to the extent possible, it is helpful to treat them separately for the sake of clarity.

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[45] Ibid., 72.

During his bid for the presidency, Nixon clearly echoed the sentiment of the nation: its dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam and its desire to focus on domestic issues. During his acceptance speech to the Republican Convention he stated the following:

> When the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years in a war in Vietnam with no end in sight, when the richest nation in the world cannot manage its economy, when the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented racial violence, when the President of the United States cannot travel abroad, or to any major city at home, then it is time for new leadership for the United States.[46]

Not limited to the executive level, the desire to alter the status quo of political thought permeated all levels of government. Exemplary of this, as Bruce Russett notes, is the fundamental change in political opinion among US Senators of the time. With surprising consistency since the Second World War, the vast majority of these officials had been opposed to any decrease in defense expenditures. In fact, between the end of the Second World War and the mid 1960s, it was a rare occurrence to have any senators support decreases. However, by the end of the 1960s, fully one quarter had adopted a contrary stance.[47]

Not to be mistaken as necessarily being a blanket condemnation of the Vietnam Conflict, this political re-prioritization was rather a recognition of the public demand for increased attention to domestic issues such as poverty, health, pollution control and employment. In order to regain what it believed to be its correct position in the military decision-making process, the United States Congress, towards the end of the Vietnam War, passed the 1973 War Powers Act by a two-thirds majority over President Nixon's veto. This act served to end the ability of any sitting president to unilaterally commit the country to protracted conflict by requiring that

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[46] History Central.com, "Presidential Elections: 1968," http://www.historycentral.com/elections/1968.html; Internet; accessed 17 January 2007.

[47] Bruce M. Russet, "The Revolt of the Masses: Public Opinion on Military Expenditures"…, 82.

congress be consulted both prior to the commencement of hostilities and regularly while they are occurring. Moreover, the president, herein, was restricted from military actions of greater than 60 days without the consent of congress.[48]

Likewise, owing to its budgetary control, congress undertook restrictions of American foreign involvement through a tightening of the national purse. Notwithstanding that there was a war being fought, the political survival of many elected representatives demanded that defence dollars entered into direct competition with domestic dollars.[49] Standing as testimony to the victor in this competition is the fact that the Vietnam War is the only major international conflict for the United States wherein the defence budget at its conclusion was less than during its conduct.[50]

It was also during the Nixon Administration that a fundamental rift in the political-military continuum came to the fore through the 'defeat' in Vietnam. It has been argued that the United States, like most Western democracies, has never done well in linking war and politics. The democratic view, contrary to the teachings of Clausewitz, appears to be that war, far from being an extension of politics, is in fact an aberration.[51] For the United States, it is theorized that the trouble in making the connection between politics and war is as a result of its understanding of the purpose of the state.

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[48] Almanac of Policy Issues, "War Powers Resolution of 1973," http://www.cs.indiana.edu/statecraft/warpow.html; Internet; accessed 27 January 2007.

[49] Bruce M. Russet, "The Revolt of the Masses: Public Opinion on Military Expenditures"…, 83.

[50] Davis B. Bobrow, "Bread, Guns and Uncle Sam," in *New Civil-Military Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), 304-308.

[51] Paul R. Shratz, "Militarism or The Military Virtues?" in *New Civil-Military Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), 273.

Differing from the Westphalian notion that the state is the prime international actor, the United States conceives the prime responsibility of the state to be, "a device for the preservation of human rights – hence by implication as an essentially passive agent in international politics".[52] It is, perhaps, for this reason that Vietnam seems to have been approached as a military problem demanding military solutions instead of a political problem requiring military input.[53] As a result, the war may arguably be described as a series of tactical successes leading to a strategic defeat.

Much has been made of the political interference of this era's presidents limiting the means of those military men charged with prosecuting the war in Vietnam. Notwithstanding the American foundational principle of civilian control over the military, the United States' historic tendency to leave, for the most part, military matters to military men, led to a belief by the Armed Services that anything less than this constituted undue interference. Such was the ill feeling between political and military leaders in the aftermath of Vietnam that the military elite seemed inclined to place the full blame for the loss at the feet of the politicians: "[T]here are strong indications that military leaders will not accept the war as a strategic failure except as a direct consequence of over control by civilians in Washington".[54] In short, the military leadership appears to have concluded that its voice in matters of policy and indeed politics had been marginalized if not wholly discounted.

President Ford, having recognized the previous administration's use of methods that were incongruous with the prevalent social attitudes, favored policies more in line with the country's

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[52] Ibid., 274.

[53] David E. Johnson, "Modern U.S. Civil-Military Relations: Wielding The Terrible Swift Sword," McNair Paper 57 (Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defence University Press, 1997), 31.

[54] Paul R. Shratz, "Militarism or The Military Virtues?"…, 275.

founding values.[55] However, his efforts to move his agenda forward in any meaningful manner were largely unsuccessful. This was partly due to his perceived lack of legitimacy but mainly was a result of the reengagement of the legislative branch of government. Again, owing to congress' resolution to control the United States' foreign involvement through the allocation of funds, several of Ford's key initiatives, such as assistance to the floundering governments of South Vietnam and Cambodia, were stalled.[56]

In 1977, President Carter took office and sought to advance foreign policy along five central tenets: the primacy of human rights in all matters of policy; an increase in ties to other democratic countries; the reduction of nuclear weapons in concert with the USSR; the implementation of a lasting peace in the Middle East; and a halt to nuclear proliferation.[57] Unfortunately, both for Carter and his agenda, it was during his administration that a number of American weaknesses were exposed.

Perhaps the most domestically poignant weakness was the revelation of the United States' reliance on foreign energy supplies. Though a reduction in oil output had been undertaken by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as early as 1973, it was not until the late 1970s, during the Carter Administration, that an energy crisis was declared. Coupled with an already stagnant economy, the impact of a decreased oil supply only served to exacerbate the problem. Inflationary pressures increased as did interest rates resulting in a situation termed 'stagflation'.

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[55] Trevor B. McKrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy since 1974*…, 40-42.

[56] Ibid., 42.

[57] Ibid., 61.

Internationally, events during the Carter Presidency generally faired no better, though some continuity with past policy was maintained. Notably, Nixon's goal of normalizing relations with China was realized under Carter. Likewise, Nixon's and Ford's efforts in the limitation of strategic nuclear weapons were also built upon.

As concerned the politics of countries deemed a threat to the United States, the situation, likewise, changed significantly. The early 1970s marked an era of lessened tension between America and its opponents. As has been alluded to, under the Nixon Administration, the United States lifted its trade embargo on China in April 1971 and undertook a bilateral meeting of heads of state in February of 1972. This had the specific effect of creating the foundation for a working, if not amicable, relationship between the United States and China. In turn, this created a situation of some consternation to the Soviet Union, which considered both countries to be rivals to its power.

May of 1972 signaled the beginning of a period of political relations between the United States and the Soviet Union known as 'détente'. Though elusive in its definition, détente sprang from the accords reached during the Moscow Summit. Here, three general agreements (military, political and economic) were reached and enshrined in two noteworthy treaties.

The military component of détente was captured in the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I). This treaty attempted, for the first time, to place limits on the nuclear arms race. Politically, both the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to seek a peaceful coexistence. Under the Basic Principles of Relations, also signed in May 1972, the two super-powers rejected spheres of influence and pledged to avoid armed conflict.[58] The economic aspect was completed

[58] U.S. History.com, "Cold War Détente: 1945-1979," http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1946.html; Internet; accessed 14 January 2007.

through a joint American – Soviet commission with the aim of fostering the trade and development of economic resources.[59]

With the American withdrawal from Vietnam in March of 1973, the threat situation to the United States seemed to have become comparatively benign. As a result of the perceived decreases in threat, the impetus for maintaining large-scale military forces had likewise decreased. Indeed, it was the perception of lessened international political tensions that partly fueled the decrease in military spending in favor of domestic issues. However, while this conclusion may have been valid as regards China, it would prove faulty in the case of the Soviet Union.

Simply put, détente did not seem to mean the same thing to either of the parties involved. For the United States, the agreements were largely taken at face value. Conversely, the Soviets viewed détente in a rather more elastic manner. Theodore Draper has theorized that the prime interest for the Soviet Union was the economic component of the agreements.[60] As he has noted, the Soviets had, for some time prior, failed to introduce measures aimed at allowing them to match the technological innovation of Western democracies. Resultantly, they were experiencing a general decline in economic growth and output.[61]

Because of the Soviet take on SALT I there was no real limit placed on the 'arms race'. Instead, either side seemed more or less capable of using this treaty in whatever manner best suited its needs. There was a similar Soviet disregard for the Basic Principles of Relations. This document, through its rejection of the notion of spheres of influence, seems to have intended that

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[59] Theodore Draper, "Appeasement and Détente," in *Defending America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 5.

[60] Ibid., 3-21.

[61] Ibid., 6.

relations were not only stable between the two super-powers but also between them and the rest of the world.[62] However, the Soviets' intervention both directly and by proxy into Angola in 1975 and their invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 clearly demonstrated their willingness to ignore those measures of détente that did not suit their purposes.

Politically, the 1960s and 1970s are among the most tumultuous periods in American history. The optimism of the Kennedy years was quickly dispelled by the country's protracted military engagement in South-East Asia. The prevalent social attitudes of the time, a fundamentally antimilitary sentiment and a firm desire to focus upon domestic concerns, manifested themselves in the political arena. The inability to achieve victory in Vietnam not only highlighted the inability of the politicians of the day to make the link between ways, means and ends, but also decreased the cohesion between political and military leadership.

The advent of détente brought with it a perceived decrease in external threats to national security. Again, this reinforced the belief that issues of defence should not win out in competition with other, more pressing, domestic priorities. Poor economic performance and political leadership, either affected by scandal or failing to find a way to unite the country, reinforced the belief that the United States was more appropriately focused inwards. All of this occurred despite the fact that the Soviet Union continued unabated in its desire for expansion or, at least, power consolidation.

Strategic Paralysis

Strategy, conceptually, is the link between political decision-making and military action. As defined by Colin Gray, strategy is, "…the tasks or missions assigned to armed forces by

[62] Ibid., 8-10

policy, in light of expected difficulties and opportunities, especially those created by enemies".[63] From the preceding analysis of the societal and political factors, it seems apparent that American strategy, per se, was generally deficient during the 1960s and 1970s. In this respect, the analysis of the strategic factor must focus on why this was so and, more importantly, the depth to which the strategy of the time was deficient.

From the commencement of the Cold War, the chief task befalling the United States was the need to formulate a workable nuclear deterrence. To complicate matters, this strategy not only had to function for the protection of the United States proper but, by geographical extension, the whole of North America and, by virtue of alliances, the whole of Western Europe. This formidable task was made no simpler by the continued build-up of greater quantities of longer range and more destructive nuclear devices.[64] To this may be added the further complication, discussed earlier, of the historic democratic tendency to view war as isolated from politics. Under these conditions it is perhaps only logical that strategies such as 'mutually assured destruction' and 'flexible response', both of which focus on the technological means of war, were created. Unfortunately, the net results of such strategies were, for the United States, both an acceptance of the continuation of the nuclear arms race, in a vain effort to stay on the winning side of a numbers game, and a stagnation of meaningful strategy formulation.

America's inability, during the early stages of the Cold War, to link war and policy, for Paul Schratz, lies at the heart of both its lack of success in Vietnam and the dearth of meaningful military input into matters of national security. The isolation of military leadership from the process of policy formulation was often explained as the required subordination of the military to

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[63] Colin S. Gray, "Recognizing and Understanding Revolution Change in Warfare: The Sovereignty of Context,"…, 18.

[64] Ibid., 18-19.

civilian authority. However, the true reason, Schratz notes, was that the deficient political conception of security through *means* negated any ability to link policy to military action. This, in turn, left the military with useless nuclear doctrines.[65] Likewise, Vietnam was entered into without a clear strategy. That is to say that the means employed, essentially counter-insurgent warfare, and the political ends, often cited as the defeat of communism, were incompatible.[66]

Exiting the war in Vietnam, the United States faced further strategic challenges. As alluded to previously, détente, initially intended to address some of the problems created by an unchecked nuclear arms race, did not yield the results hoped for. Just as inappropriate strategy had doomed the United States to a protracted and, ultimately unsuccessful war in Vietnam, a fundamental misunderstanding of the Soviet leadership led to the erroneous belief that the USSR would accept the "truce" that détente was supposed to be.[67] In fact, it was during the early 1970s that the United States came to realize that the USSR had not only closed the nuclear ballistic missile gap, but had also undertaken a vast program aimed at improving conventional forces as well.[68] From 1971 to 1975, the USSR increased its standing armed forces from a strength of 3.4 million to 4 million. Over the same period of time, the United States' force levels dropped from 2.7 million to 2.1 million.[69]

While parity in nuclear weapons was, in itself, alarming, the widening gap in conventional forces in the Soviet favor was more so for two related reasons. First, the strategic

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[65] Paul R. Shratz, "Militarism or The Military Virtues?"…, 276-281.

[66] Ibid., 283.

[67] David M. Abshire, "Twenty Years in the Strategic Labyrinth," in *America in the World: 1962-1987* (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc, 1987), 20.

[68] Ibid., 67.

[69] Edward N. Luttwak, "European Insecurity and American Policy," in *Defending America* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1977), 183.

counter to any aggression of the Warsaw Pact was NATO. However, NATO suffered all the problems commonly associated with a voluntary alliance. That is to say that not all partners contributed equally and yet all had an equal say. Moreover, the state of NATO in the 1970s was one of an organization lacking in standards. Each member nation made use of different equipment and trained their armed forces to differing levels.[70] As a further complication NATO was, relative to the threat, geographically disparate. Though both the United States and Canada had forces forward deployed in Europe, the bulk of the troops necessary to stop an envisioned attack would have to come from continental North America, specifically the United States. This added a complicating time dimension to the defense of Europe.

The second concern regarding the Soviet overmatch in conventional forces derives from the fact that, viewed in terms of tasks and purposes, the forces of the Warsaw Pact had for some time held an asymmetrical advantage. NATO was, indeed it remains, a complicated coalition established for the purpose of collective defence. It was structured along divisional and corps lines in depth and, as mention earlier, depended on reinforcements to bolster its operation. Being confined to the defence limited, if not removed, its initiative in conflict. Moreover, the chief concern of the member countries was, arguably, not the common defense of Western Europe but rather the defence of their individual countries.

Comparatively, the Warsaw Pact was a primarily offensive entity with three chief and prioritized tasks: to ensure the submissiveness of Eastern Europe to the Kremlin; to, on order, seize Western Europe in part or in whole; and to protect the Soviet Union from external threats.[71] Since the only real threat to its integrity was internal unrest, the latter task was essentially moot.

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[70] Ibid., 181.

[71] Ibid., 185.

In this light, the build up of Soviet conventional forces only served to increase their pre-existing advantage.

In the face of these facts Henry Kissinger, no longer in public office, warned a meeting of the NATO Alliance in 1979 that the alliance could no longer view nuclear deterrence as a security panacea:

> …our European allies should not keep asking us to multiply strategic assurances that we cannot possibly mean or if we do mean, we should not want to execute because if we execute, we risk the destruction of civilization. Our strategic dilemma is not solved by verbal reassurances; it requires redesigning our forces and doctrine. There is no point in complaining about declining American will, or criticizing this or that American Administration, for we are facing an objective crisis and it must be remedied.[72]

Having served both under the Nixon and Ford Administrations, and therefore having been a key architect of the American conception of détente, Kissinger's remarks are telling. Essentially, such observations appear to demonstrate America's realization that détente, if it ever worked, had effectively ended. Perhaps more importantly, however, was the realization that the American strategy in place was not acceptable to the populations it sought to protect. Clearly, this strategy had failed.

However, despite the recognition of inappropriate strategy regarding the Soviet Union, the tasks of the United States Armed Forces continued to mount owing chiefly to the realization of the United States' dependency upon foreign sources of energy. President Carter, during his 1980 State of the Union Address, stated, "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military

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[72] Henry A. Kissinger, "The Future of NATO," in *America in the World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 101-102.

force".[73] Effectively, this meant that the strategic attention of the United States was focused upon the Far East, specifically the Koreas, Western Europe and the Middle Eastern Gulf region.

Perhaps the most important aspect concerning American strategy during the analyzed period is the comprehension of the fallacy of nuclear deterrence both vis-à-vis the Soviets and the American people. Détente was an abject failure as, under its banner, the USSR not only achieved nuclear parity but also surpassed conventional Western conventional forces. Moreover, the strategies designed for the use of nuclear weapons were, publicly, viewed with horror. Yet, despite the recognition of inappropriate methods, and the decreases both in money and military manpower, the United States continued to inflate its strategic imperatives. Clearly, deep strategic deficiencies existed.

New Geography

As a factor for analysis within an MR, geography poses some pitfalls. In a real sense, geography can be viewed from both a static and variable perspective. In the former, the geography of a country, that is to say its physical location, will necessarily be key in the way it interacts with other states. Likewise, location will dictate both opportunities and disadvantages.[74] In the case of the latter, certain advances in technology often render irrelevant previous notions of geographical distinction. Long-range, rapid, non-stop, travel, various means of communication and international organizations all stand as examples of items which blur geographic boundaries. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed two profound geographic phenomena which were formative to the MR.

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[73] Trevor B. McKrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy since 1974*…, 81.

[74] Colin S. Gray, "Recognizing and Understanding Revolution Change in Warfare: The Sovereignty of Context,"…, 27.

First, the United States tried, during this period, to retreat to within its own borders. The United States has long held isolationist tendencies. Physically separated from other continents and having been, since its creation, the dominant player within its own continent, it has had to wrestle with the depth to which it desired external engagement. However, having emerged from World War II as a dominant power America had since been obliged to maintain a global view. But, this did not mean that the isolationist sentiment had disappeared.

Indeed, as has been shown, the social and political fallout from Vietnam created an upsurge in the view that America should look after its own problems ahead of those of others. This desire by the American public, echoed by the political leadership, to confine itself within its boundaries had a direct effect upon the freedom of action of America with respect to the rest of the world. Exemplary of this is the United States' conception of détente. Détente was an acceptable instrument both to America and Americans in that it sought to, in the worst case, maintain the status quo relative to the geo-strategic postures of the two superpowers and, at best, roll back certain capabilities in an equal fashion. This should have meant that the United States was able to devote less attention to outside influences. There are, however, problems with such attempts.

Any misconception of a country's geography relative to others imperils decision-making. Believing oneself safe to focus inwardly will necessarily lead to faulty estimates of the means necessary to ensure one's security. This is primarily due to the fact that a predominantly isolationist view stands counter to the notion that vital interests to any country may exist outside its own borders. Directly related to this is the likelihood that isolationist views will skew perceptions of the necessary levels of force to ensure security. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, a willingness to focus attention inward, may well highlight the vulnerability of others.

It is, partially, for these fundamental misjudgments of geography that the United States found itself less than well placed globally at the end of the 1970s.

The second phenomenon, more than any previous technological advancement, blurred the previously held notions of geography. The decades under examination saw the genesis of an entirely new geography - cyberspace. Building upon the computer advancements of the early 1960s, the idea of mass connection of computers for the purposes of data sharing was first put forward in 1962. This notion was seized upon by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA) and in 1969 the first working demonstration of the technology took place.[75] Though the internet, as it is now understood, did not come to fruition until the late 1980s, the earlier realization of the potential of cyberspace was profound.

The envisioned global interconnectivity presented both opportunities and challenges on a massive scale the majority of which, at the time, were probably little considered. Perhaps the greatest impact that early cyberspace had was simply the realization of an advanced technological concept. That is to say that while cyberspace is a significant technological innovation, the ability to conceive, design and produce it is more so. If nothing else, this solidified the notion that computer enabled technology held the primary position for future innovation.

The 1960s and 1970s were characterized by a certain geographical dichotomy. While the overriding sentiment seemed to favor a retrenchment of America within its borders, technological innovation served to further blur these borders. Interestingly, while the isolationist sentiment only served to complicate the geo-strategic problems of the United States, the creation of a new geography helped to indicate a potential path to resolution.

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[75] Internet Society, "A Brief History of the Internet," http://www.isoc.org/internet/history/brief.shtml#Origins; Internet; accessed 28 January 2007.

Military Conclusions

As has been noted earlier, the culmination of the above outlined factors, among others, served to create a MR. That is to say that other-than-military variables forced the military to accept that old methodologies were no longer sufficient to these widened demands. This implies that a fundamental break in the conceptualization of warfare must have taken place. What theoretically should have occurred through the MR, then, was the emergence of a new way of war. This did not happen. Owing to the context in which the MR was interpreted, under the belief that conventional warfare was both likely and enduring in nature, the United States entered into an epistemological trap. The result of this underlying, faulty, assumption would bind them to a myopic vision of warfare and, because of this render virtually irrelevant both the reconceptualized way of war and its key enabler, the RMA.

Until the end of the 1970s, the United States practiced a way of warfare that was consistent with the Toffler's notion of the industrial age. Along these lines, other scholars, most prominently Russell Weigley, have advanced the notion of an 'American way of war' that spanned the time from the Civil War to World War II: "[I]t is true that during 1941-45 and throughout American history until that time, the United States usually possessed no national strategy for the employment of force or the threat of force to attain political ends, except as the nation used force in wartime openly and directly in pursuit of military victories as complete as was desired or possible."[76] As Max Boot paraphrases Weigley's theory, this style of warfare was chiefly characterized by a "grinding strategy of attrition".[77] This strategy was facilitated, indeed it could only be brought about, by the mobilization of the nation's industry and populace. In the

[76] Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), xix.

[77] Max Boot, "The New American Way of War," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, Iss. 4, (Jul/Aug 2003): 41.

face of such power, Boot notes, there was little requirement for either tactical or strategic acumen as the sheer mass of the US military was historically sufficient to carry the day.[78]

However, during the Vietnam War this approach to conflict clearly yielded lesser results. During the formative period of the MR, not only was this 'strategy of attrition' shown to be deficient, but precisely because of the combined impact of the social, political, strategic and geographic factors that yielded the MR, the 'American way of war' essentially became unacceptable. Necessarily, this mandated a change to the military's conception of war predicated upon the conclusions that this institution drew from the factors within the MR. In this respect, there are five major themes that appear to have been taken up by the US Armed Forces.

First and foremost was the realization that the American public would no longer support involvement in any conflict that did not directly threaten the United States' vital interests. Second and directly related to the rejection of non-essential conflict was the belief that both the public at large and politicians, consequently, had become casualty adverse. That is not to say that the United States came to believe that wars could be won without the loss of soldiers' lives, but rather an equation of sorts emerged wherein public support was hypothesized to decrease proportional to the casualties suffered. Third, owing to the American perception of war as an aberrant state, the tendency towards isolationism and the cancellation of the draft, the conclusion was drawn that not only would the United States avoid protracted engagement but any future conflicts would most likely be 'come as you are' wars. Fourth, there existed the realization that the deficiencies in strategy required solutions that exceeded the standing doctrine and capabilities of the time. Finally, there was the deduction that any solution to the problems that faced the

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[78] Ibid., 41.

United States Armed Forces lay, at least in part, in technological innovation and the newly discovered geography of cyberspace.

Free from the grip of Vietnam, the United States Armed Forces were able to focus themselves upon the chief threat of the day, the Soviet Union, armed with their conclusions drawn from the MR. Not surprisingly, it was the United States Army, having borne the brunt of the fighting and received the lion's share of the blame for the loss in Vietnam, which was forced to provide a credible solution to the threat.

In 1973, realizing the Army's deficiencies in the manner in which the Vietnam War had been fought, the decision was taken to establish the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC).[79] This command was specifically charged with guiding the Army not only in matters of training and doctrine but also in matters of organization and equipment.[80] Focusing upon the problem of the massed, numerically superior and echeloned forces of the Soviet Union, a credible solution was envisioned through a reformulation of doctrine, a rationalization of organizational concepts and a policy of focused rearmament.

Lest it appear that a solution that, at once, satisfied the perceived demands of the MR and provided a credible response to the Soviet Threat was immediately available, it should be noted that this evolution spanned some fifteen years from 1976 to 1991. Notwithstanding, the net result of this undertaking was no less than the formulation, in the American context, of maneuver warfare theory, the creation of the operational level of war, and the facilitation of joint operations.[81] Notably, the enabling component of all of these concepts, that is to say the thing

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[79] Richard M. Swain, "Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Military," in *The Operational Art: Developments in the Theory of War* (Westport: Praeger,1996), 147.

[80] Ibid., 149.

[81] Ibid., 147-166.

that allowed them to be applied within the constraints of the MR, was the development of appropriate equipment including command and control systems, information gathering resources and a wide range of highly sophisticated, long-range precision munitions; in other words, the nascent technology of the RMA. For many this marked a departure from the traditional American way of war. However, though entirely understandable given the circumstances, the focus upon a specific threat and an assumed style of warfare was, retrospectively, an error.

The New Way of War?

While some authors propose that a 'new American way of war' exists, this is simply not the case. Notably, there are those, such as Boot, who are fully in accordance with the idea that the RMA is synonymous with the new way. Contrary to Weigley's notion of a strategy of attrition, Boot posits that the American way of war has fundamentally transformed into one whose "hallmarks are speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise".[82] Others, such as Ian Roxborough, generally agree:

> The American way of war is characterized by an obsession with speed, firepower and decision. It is designed to overwhelm. Speed plus devastating firepower is intended to shock and crush an opponent, rather than simply grind him down or outmaneuver him…There is to be a clean end to the fighting and a clear division between war and peace.[83]

Conversely, Colin Gray has identified an American approach the aspects of which can be divided into those that are new, or at least evolved, and those that endure.[84]

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[82] Max Boot. "The New Way of American War"…,42.

[83] Ian Roxborough, "Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terrorism, and the Owl of Minerva," *Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol. 16, 2003, 204-205, quoted in Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*. in *Presidential Policies and the Road to the Second Iraq War* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 273.

[84] Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), 30.

Examining first the enduring aspects, Gray hypothesizes that the United States Armed Forces have effectively been unable to learn from the lessons of history. For this reason, he describes the American way of war, at once, to be *ahistoric*, *apolitical* and *astrategic*.[85] Specifically, he remarks upon the continued tendency of Americans to view war and peace as separate and distinct states of affairs contrary to Clausewitz's observation. Likewise, he notes the American desire to maintain the separation of war and politics. This, combined with the United States' tradition of avoiding meaningful interaction between policymakers and the military elite, represents a persistence of the tendency toward undertaking conflicts separate of unifying strategic direction.[86]

Gray also recognizes as enduring concepts what Boot seems to attribute to the RMA enabled aspects of the 'new American way of war'. In this respect, characteristics such as *offensive focus, firepower centric*, *mass, logistic excellence* and *problem focus* are listed.[87] As *ahistoric* as Gray depicts the United States to be, the majority of these defining items are reinforced from previously learned lessons. Nonetheless, they are not new. Offensive focus, as an example, is drawn from the historic demonstration of that posture's success while both the application of overwhelming firepower and mass has, likewise, enabled this posture. Similarly, the historic tendency of the United States to enter, chiefly, into war abroad, and only reluctantly so, at once reinforces the requirement for superior logistics and the idea that military conflict is a viable, if undesirable, resolution mechanism.

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[85] Ibid., 30.

[86] Ibid., 30-33.

[87] Ibid., 30.

What is new within Gray's formulation of the American way of war are the characteristics of *impatience*, *casualty sensitivity* and, arguably, *technological dependence*.[88] *Impatience* seems to be a logical extension to the belief that the state of war exists only as an aberration. This social rejection of warfare has always placed pressure upon the military for a speedy resolution to conflict. However, the solidified demand of the American public that the United States not enter into protracted wars, such as was typified during Vietnam and was consistent with Weigley's concept of 'grinding attrition', has necessitated the attainment of an enemy's defeat in the shortest possible time.

Though sensitivity to casualties is most often associated with a public unwillingness to accept the cost, in lives, of military intervention, that is but one aspect. As Gray notes, this sensitivity is further compounded by the realization that, large though the American Armed Forces are, the responsibilities of a superpower will always exceed the resources of a professional military.[89] No longer able to mobilize consistent with Weigley's characterization, economies of force in both the number of conflicts entered into and the manner in which individual conflicts are prosecuted have become crucial.

It is, therefore, only logical that, given the above characterizations, the American way of war should rely upon technology. While such a focus on technology, as a means, is well grounded in the historical triumphs of industrial-age conflict, two aspects make it new in this conception. First is the relative weight that is now placed upon technology within the American construct. Here, we have seen the virtual exchange of soldiers in favour of technologically advanced equipment. Second is the belief that modern technological advancement offers a

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[88] Ibid., 30.

[89] Ibid., 47.

potential panacea to the issues highlighted through the MR. Indeed, such is the depth of this belief that it has spawned not only the discussion, generally, of RMAs but also the United States' pursuit of the RMA. As Gray poignantly observes, "[t]he exploitation of machinery is the American way of war".[90]

In light of the preceding discussion, it is fair to ask if a 'new American way of war' truly exists. To be sure, the characterizations of those such as Boot and Roxborough are not wrong but neither are they thorough enough to demonstrate a categorical difference with the theory of Weigley. Instead, they are exemplary of those who speak of the RMA and the 'new American way of war' as one in the same. While there may be new aspects within the American way of war, the novelty is not extensive. Indeed, it differs only slightly from previous conceptions. This is not surprising if one considers the context under which the United States interpreted the MR.

Following the Vietnam War, the United States was faced with an enemy, the Soviet Union, which conceived of war in essentially the same manner as it did. That is to say that the problem at hand for the United States Armed Forces was to effect the defeat of its enemy in a predominantly conventional military engagement. The result of any conflict under this construct would theoretically result, lacking the use of nuclear weapons, in a clear winner and looser.

As has been earlier pointed out, the First Gulf War did not mark the arrival of the RMA. It did, however, offer the United States its first opportunity to fully test its doctrinal, organizational and technological advancements to that point. Insofar as the United States Armed Forces, undertaking conventional conflict in defence of vital national interests, achieved their operational goals with minimal casualties in a previously inconceivably short period of time, the

[90] Ibid., 35.

test was deemed wholly successful.[91] Consequently, what this war marked was a widespread recognition and acceptance of the potential of the RMA and, problematically, the mistaken belief that a viable, universally applicable 'new American way of war' had been achieved predicated upon that potential.

The problem here is not that the military reformulated its war-fighting doctrine. Indeed, given the MR, this was an imperative. What is truly unfortunate is that the reformulation was contextually specific and is, therefore, relevant only to conventional conflict:

> …Desert Storm embodied the Pentagon's way of war: Clear aims and well-defined means; an asymmetrical and vastly inferior enemy; technological superiority and massed armies; and speedy maneuver coupled with firepower-intensive operations. For the United States, Operation Desert Storm was a textbook example of the military doctrine found in the war-fighting texts of each of the armed services. And in its aftermath, the military planned for future wars that were a mirror image of this highly successful operation with doctrine, training, procurement all geared for this type of operation.[92]

Likewise, the technological solution envisioned to address the MR and enable the new way of war, that is to say the RMA, is limited to being fully effective only within conflicts that meet this contextual paradigm. Ironically, Weigley, himself, warned of this potential pitfall:

> [t]he search for a new strategic doctrine must not be confused with the search for a better weapons technology and with technical questions. To seek refuge in technology from hard problems of strategy and policy was already another dangerous American tendency, fostered by the pragmatic qualities of the American character…[93]

Three major conclusions may be drawn from the American reaction to the factors which facilitated the MR. Foremost and consistent with the theory surrounding MRs, the United States

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[91] United States casualty figures for the First Gulf War were considerably lower than initially feared. Although different sources offer minor discrepancies, approximate open-source figures are 39 killed in ground combat, an additional 20 lost to land mines and 63 aircraft downed leading to the loss of 110 airmen. See, for example: USA Today.com, "Why US Casualties Were Low," http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-04-20-cover-usat_x.htm; Internet; accessed 26 April 2007.

[92] Richard H. Schultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 7.

was forced to undertake a reformation of its conception of warfare. While several of the characteristics are different from the previous conception of an 'attritionist' approach, the preponderance of the old way of war remains. Moreover, insofar as this 'new American way of war' was developed within a specific and narrow context, it produced results that, while contextually effective, are most applicable to the conventional warfare paradigm. The technological component of this 'new way of war', the RMA, is similarly constrained. There having been so little new in the re-conception of American warfare, the question is begged as to whether this new way is sufficient to the contemporary threat. The answer lies within the logical implication of the first two conclusions. That is, it must stand to reason that any threat sufficiently different in context from that which engendered both the MR, as enunciated through the reformulated way of war, and the RMA, offers the real possibility of rendering both virtually irrelevant.

To illustrate the conventional warfare-centric view of the United States and the irrelevance of both the American way of war and the RMA to certain contemporary threats, the case of Iraq will be utilized. Through a brief examination of factors similar to those central to the creation of the MR it will be demonstrated that, but for their myopic view, the United States should have been aware of the likelihood that entering into conflict with Iraq would mandate the latter's adoption of irregular warfare, and one which, in the context of this country, is particularly complex. Likewise, a subsequent comparison of the American way of war and that of insurgencies will demonstrate the significant shortcomings within the American way.

None of These Things is Just Like the Other

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[93] Russell F. Weigley. *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*…, 416.

Having fought the First Iraq War with such success, the United States was, in all likelihood, predisposed to view any future engagement of this threat in the same way it had before. Indeed, the purely military and governmental components of this threat looked much the same as they had previously with the exception that they were reduced in capacity and, therefore, presumably weaker. However, an examination of Iraq prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) along 'other-than-military' lines would have revealed a greater problem than the purely military one that the United States perceived. Just as a 'new American way of war' had been driven by non-military factors, which culminated to create a MR, a similar analysis of social, political, strategic and geographic factors would have suggested a potential for warfare that was entirely different from the conventional style that the United States presumed.

Iraqi Social Composition

The historical and enduring dynamics at play within the social structure of Iraq center around religion, race and tribal affiliation. While this would appear to be a relatively simple dynamic, this is not the case. The best way, therefore, to gain an understanding of the social make-up of pre-OIF Iraq, is to have an understanding of the ethnic composition of this country, the role of tribes within its traditional society and a rudimentary knowledge of the history of the region.

Ethnicity within the region derives from the historic conquest and settlement of the territory by various empires. While a cursory examination may demonstrate that the vast majority of the country is made up of Arabs, some 75 - 80 percent, with the remainder being comprised, in the main, of Kurds, 15 – 20 percent[94], this is somewhat of an oversimplification. A better indication of the ethnic diversity of Iraq comes about through the division of the

[94] Infoplease, "Iraq: History, Geography, Government and Culture," http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107644.html; Internet; accessed 9 April, 2007.

population along religious lines. Here, we see that the country can be further divided among Islamic sects with the majority, approximately 60 – 65 percent professing the Shiite faith and the remainder, approximately 32 percent, following the Sunni faith.[95] While religion alone is not a true indication of ethnic origin, in the case of Iraq it is both a historic indicator and, more importantly, an indicator of social allegiance. Specifically, the majority Shia population can trace its roots to a common history with Iran and the Persian Empire. The Sunnis, alternatively, are better characterized within the Arabian culture. Finally, the Kurds, regardless of religion, form a third distinct ethnic grouping.

Within the major ethnic groupings there is not a great deal of homogeneity owing to the region's tribal composition and the functions these organizations serve. Iraqis distinguish themselves not only by their tribes, but also by their clans, sub-clans and families within the greater tribal organization.[96] Both the greater tribe and its individual subcomponents have historic ties to land and resources that serve to further define them geographically and, more importantly, within a hierarchy of power. Any given individual, then, is bound within this social context and, from that, derives obligations, rights and status.[97] With this background knowledge, a brief study of the region's history is possible.

In the mid 1500s, following the end of Mongol rule over the area of Mesopotamia, the Shia Safavid rulers of Iran and the Ottoman Turks both undertook its capture. While this conflict lasted for approximately one century, it ended with the Ottoman Empire in possession of the

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Richard H. Schultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary* Combat…, 203.

[97] Ibid., 203.

region in 1638.[98] It should be noted that while the captured territory closely resembled that of modern day Iraq, the Ottomans could not have been said to be in control of the Northern Kurdish region whose mountainous terrain acted as a natural obstacle to invasion.

Given the distance of the seat of government of the newly enlarged Empire, the Turks were forced to consolidate the region by placing indigenous Mesopotamians in positions of power. As they shared a common religion with the Sunni Arabs of the region, these people were the natural choice. Resultantly, the Turks bestowed upon the minority Sunni tribes education, training and positions of power in exchange for their help in consolidating control of the region.[99] Essentially, the decision to empower the Sunnis had two major effects. Primarily it elevated an ethnically and religiously distinct minority into positions of power over a culturally diverse region. Second, in making use of the existing tribal structures within the Sunni culture, it facilitated an expansion of tribal affiliations that would eventually become regional powers unto themselves.[100]

Towards the end of the First World War, the British gained control of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul provinces from the Ottoman Empire. However, due to a lack of appropriate governance, the areas experienced an uprising in 1920. While this revolt was put down, it highlighted the requirement to make use of locals in government. To this end, the British turned to those best prepared to occupy such positions in short order; the Sunnis. As a result, the British had, again, institutionalized the ruling position of the minority Sunni Arabs within the new state

[98] Ibid., 202.

[99] Ibid., 202.

[100] Ibid., 202.

of Iraq.[101] In 1921, the pro-western Sunni Arab Prince Faisal was given monarchy over Iraq. Realizing the precarious state of the country, Faisal embarked upon a policy of solidifying the mechanisms of public control. In so doing, he relied heavily upon the British, but he also made use of the substantial number of Arab officers who had deserted or otherwise left the Ottoman Army.[102] Again, owing to the religious leanings of the Turks, the vast majority of these officers were Sunni.

The longest period of social stability within modern Iraq took place under the rule of the monarchy. In 1932, Iraq was granted full independence and it joined the Arab league in 1945. However, the pro-Western monarchy of Iraq was overthrown in 1958 and the next decade saw the transfer of national power between various military juntas and religious regimes. In 1968, the Baath Party under Major General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr seized control of the country. Al-Bakr was succeeded, in 1979, by Saddam Hussein. Thus began this figure's rule until his regime was overthrown by the Americans in 2003. Despite the turbulent nature of the modern pre-OIF state of Iraq, what is important to comprehend is that at no time did any group, notwithstanding their political leanings, other than the Sunnis have absolute power.

If any one conclusion is to be drawn from the social analysis of Iraq, it must be that owing to the ethnic, religious and tribal disparity within this country there simply is no historically common ideology or identity. More to the point, there is not even a sufficient base upon which a common identity may be readily constructed. Given the complex social nature of Iraq and the historically diverse ethnic and religious ties, it is logical that geography be next examined.

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[101] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 64-65.

[102] Ibid., 66.

Iraqi Geography

Iraq is a large country, covering some 437,393 square kilometers, and has a population of approximately 16.5 million people.[103] Of greater importance, however, are the concentration of the population and the positioning of this country relative to others. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers run roughly north to south through Iraq to the Persian Gulf. Forming between them the majority of arable land, this area contains both the preponderance of built-up areas and the vast majority of the population; some 75 percent.[104] The north of the country is generally mountainous while the west is mostly arid desert. The major exportable resource for Iraq is oil and gas the majority of which is also in the general area of the plain between the Tigris and Euphrates. [105]

Bordering Iraq to the north are the countries of Turkey and Syria. To the west are Syria and Jordan. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait form the border in the southwest and south respectively. Finally, to the east, Iraq shares a common border with Iran. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that the ethnic/religious populations within the country are also geographically concentrated. While major urban centres are an exception to this characterization, generally one finds that the mountainous northern area is predominantly Kurdish, the central region Sunni and the southern portion Shia.

Given the preceding social analysis, much of the above information appears intuitive. The Kurds have historically occupied the north, the Shias, sharing a common religion and history with Iran are logically concentrated along this border and the Sunnis, having historically been in

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[103] Library of Congress Country Studies, "A Country Study: Iraq," http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/iqtoc.html; Internet; accessed 9 April 2007.

[104] U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Iraq," http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6804.htm; Internet, accessed 9 April 2007.

positions of power would gravitate to the location of the seat of government and other population centres. However, what is of prime importance in this geographic examination is how the Iraqi population aligns relative to resources and other states. In other words, that section of the population historically favoured in positions of power despite their minority status has a limited physical presence within the locations where the country's resource wealth is located. Additionally, the nature of the concentrations of the various populations naturally allows for the formation of ties between sub-groups of the Iraqi population and other states. The Kurdish population in the north is naturally drawn to forming ties with Turkish Kurds while the Shia population in the south may look to religiously similar Iran.

Iraqi Politics

Given the social and geographic realities of pre-OIF Iraq, it is little wonder that its political history is one of totalitarianism. Notwithstanding, as the historical power arrangements have been touched upon, however briefly, within the social analysis this section will limit itself to an examination of Iraqi politics during the time of Saddam Hussein's rule.

Saddam Hussein seized control of the Baath party, and consequently the state of Iraq, in 1979. Himself a Sunni, Saddam continued the historical precedent of ensuring this minority's control. It is interesting to note that within the Baathist state Sunnis were not exclusively in positions of power. In fact, while in power, Saddam ensured the creation of a large public-sector middle class that comprised all of the various portions of the Iraqi population.[106] However, the key positions within the state were retained by Sunnis.

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[105] National Geographic.com, "Map: Middle East Natural Resources," http://www.nationalgeographic.com/iraq/map_midEastNR.html; Internet; accessed 9 April 2007.

[106] Ibid., 67.

As the dictatorial head of a totalitarian state, Saddam essentially had three means of retaining power: leveraging the sale of natural resources, specifically oil and gas, to provide infrastructure and services to the population; a system of bribery and patronage to purchase support for his rule; and a substantially large coercive arm of government including the armed forces, various natures of police and intelligence services.[107]

Similar to many long-standing regimes, the Baathist Party was skilled in the use of these means of self-preservation. Having come to power through violence, Hussein's politics were solely focused on the retention of that power. To this end, Baathist politics roughly equated to undermining traditional tribal authority and otherwise splintering the cohesion of the major segments of the population. Evidence of the swift application of physically coercive means lies in the regime's campaign against the Iraqi Kurdish population in 1987-1988. Here, it is believed that as many as 50,000 Kurds were killed and twice that number wounded in attacks that included the use of chemical weapons.[108] Similarly, a 1991 uprising of Shia Iraqis was violently put down. It has been publicly estimated that this action resulted in the deaths of some 250, 000 people the majority of which inhabited southern portions of the country.[109]

Not all of Saddam's political measures were, however, physically coercive albeit the end results were similar. Following the disaster of the First Iraq War, the United Nations (UN) imposed Oil-for-Food sanctions provided him with an opportunity not only to further subjugate the population but also to increase anti-western sentiment among them.[110] Essentially, by

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[107] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*…, 67.

[108] The White House, "Life Under Saddam Hussein," http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/04/20030404-1.html; Internet; accessed 9 March 2007.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*…, 223.

selectively denying the goods provided for by this programme, Saddam was able to virtually ensure the dependence of the population upon him.

As an interesting adjunct to the aftermath of the 1991 war and the subsequent ceasefire agreement, Saddam's grip on power, especially in those areas protected by the no-fly zones, began to slip. To rectify this condition, immediately following the loss to the Americans, he was forced to reverse his long held position concerning tribal authority: "Saddam Hussein's regime bought their allegiance by offering cash, food, other resources, and the opportunity to exercise new authority…[t]ribal heads were empowered by the regime, which established official bonds with them".[111] As the situation further deteriorated, Saddam was forced to give greater powers to the tribes. Armed and given specific areas, respective tribal chiefs were mandated to form militias responsible to quell any internal dissent. By 1998, these tribal militias had come under the coordinating authority of the Ministry of the Interior and were, essentially, integrated both into the internally oriented policing and externally oriented defensive plans of the regime.[112]

While it is true to characterize the politics of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime as being entirely focused on the preservation of power, the results of such actions must also be highlighted. Here, there are four points of note. Primarily, Saddam continued the earlier institutionalized privilege of the Sunnis. Although his Baathist Party did create a large public-sector middle class that had members from each portion of the greater Iraqi population, Sunnis remained entrenched in the key positions within the regime. Additionally, as is clear from his wield of the physically coercive arms of his government, his repression of significant segments of society was decidedly brutal. Thirdly, it can be seen that, when possible, Saddam sought to provide selectively unifying messages. Generally, this took the form of laying blame for the

[111] Ibid., 224.

greater population's strife at the feet of the West. Finally, out of the necessity to maintain the subjugation of the whole of the country, the Baathists were forced to offer greater measures of authority and power to the various tribes.

Iraqi Strategy

The final portion of the pre-OIF analysis of Iraq focuses upon its strategy. Similar to the previous examination, this section will largely limit itself to the period of Saddam's rule. It must be said that, owing to the despotic rule of Saddam Hussein, Iraq's strategy was his strategy. In brief, this strategy was initially characterized by regional hegemonic ambitions but, owing to a great reduction in military power at the hands of the United States in 1991, it shifted over time to focus upon the preservation of the state and, consequently, Saddam's rule.

Saddam's desire to expand his influence within the region is perhaps best exemplified through his wars of aggression both with Iran and Kuwait. Iraq's reasoning for entering into war with Iran in 1980 is complex. Without doubt, two of the major motivating items were the perceived instability within Iran following its Islamic fundamentalist revolution and the desire for greater regional control.

The Ayatollah Khomeini, who in 1962 had taken refuge in the An Najaf region of Iraq, was expelled from the country in 1977. Embittered by the denial of this sanctuary, he vowed to free oppressed Iraqi Shias from the Baathists.[113] His ascension to power in 1979 marked the possibility that the already existing tensions between Iraqi Sunnis and Shias could be exacerbated. Likewise, it threatened to undermine the measures that the Baathists had taken to solidify Iraq within the Arab world. However, the revolution that swept Khomeini into power

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[112] Ibid., 224-225.

[113] Global Security.org, "Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988)" http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/iran-iraq.htm; Internet; accessed 9 April 2007.

also weakened the defensive posture of Iran as the old Imperial Army was purged.[114] From this perspective, Iran seemed to offer an opportune target.

Coincidental with the Iranian fundamentalist revolution, longstanding territorial claims between the two states were revived. Iraq claimed that the Khouzestan province of Iran, being historically populated by Arabs, should rightfully be its possession. Similarly, the Shatt al Arab waterway dispute, previously mediated in 1975, was also contested by the Baathists in 1979.[115] Regardless of the varied motivations, the decision to go to war, retrospectively, appears to have been fueled by Saddam's desire for increased resources including land, access to the Persian Gulf and oil. His impetuous for action was the perception of Iran's vulnerabilities. The war, launched by Iraq in September of 1980, turned into a stalemate that lasted until a UN brokered ceasefire took place in August of 1988.

Though it would be hard to conclusively declare a winner as none of the precipitating issues were resolved and the loss of life on both sides was high, Iraq did emerge from the conflict in relatively better military condition than when it entered. That is to say that the Iraqi army returned well armed and trained.[116] Economically, however, the war had taken a great deal out of Iraq. In fact, it was the economic pressures facing the Baathist regime that caused Saddam to look towards the vulnerable, resource wealthy country of Kuwait.

Iraq had relied heavily upon Kuwait to help finance the war with Iran. By the end of this conflict, it found itself indebted by US 80 billion dollars, 65 billion of which it owed to

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

Kuwait.[117] Additional grievances were also brought forward by Iraq. These included such things as having fought the war to the benefit of Kuwait, the allegation that this country was conducting oil drilling in disputed territory and that its intentional overproduction of oil was unduly harming Iraq.[118] Notwithstanding the reasoning, Saddam was certain that the Arab community would ultimately sanction his occupation of Kuwait and, in August 1990, attacked to occupy the country. This strategic miscalculation led to the formation of a broad international coalition that effected the liberation of Kuwait and, in doing so, the destruction of a great deal of the Iraqi military.

Losing such a large portion of his military during the First Gulf War, Saddam had to virtually abandon his hegemonic desires and resort, instead, to measures aimed at the continued survival of the state and, consequently, the regime.[119] To this end, Saddam undertook a strategy aimed at asserting Iraq as the premier Arab state. Conceptually, this would be achieved if he could show continued defiance if the face of Western pressures. For Saddam this meant that any situation that presented itself as possessing the possibility of increased status within the Arab community was to be acted upon.

This equated directly to the continued breach of the no-fly zones imposed as conditions of First Gulf War's ceasefire. Additionally, Saddam embarked upon a campaign of hindering and eventually denying the mandated UN weapons inspections while simultaneously demanding

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[117]ACIG.org, "Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf Database," http://www.acig.org/artman/publish/article_213.shtml; Internet; accessed 9 April 2007.

[118] Ibid.

[119] According to the United States Central Command Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm post operation report executive summary, losses to Iraq included the destruction, in whole or part, of 42 divisions, the total destruction of naval forces and the loss of 50 percent of combat aircraft. Please see: Jeffery T. Richelson ed., "Operation Desert Storm: Ten Years After, A National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book," http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/; Internet; accessed 27 April 2007.

that post-war sanctions be lifted. This course of action was quite successful. As a result of blocked weapons inspections in 1996, the head of the UN Special Commission, Rolf Ekeus, undertook a re-negotiation of the terms of the inspections.[120] The renegotiated agreement outlined a programme of inspections of 60 sensitive sites under the supervision of an Iraqi senior official.[121] Such provisions rendered UN weapons inspections all but irrelevant.

Other actions had equivalent outcomes. Saddam's manipulation of the Oil-for-Food system of sanctions throughout the period 1995-1998 was masterful. Essentially, by initiating a series of kickbacks and lucrative contracts within willing countries, he created a situation where international consensus on any issue involving Iraq was impossible to achieve.[122] Such was the success of Saddam's manipulations that following Operation Desert Fox, a 1998 four-day combined United States and British strategic bombing campaign to compel Iraqi compliance with weapons inspections, Arab support for the Iraqi cause, as espoused by Saddam, actually increased. Similarly, several Western states publicly denounced the attacks.[123]

Although one can characterize the strategy of pre-OIF Iraq as being largely a series of miscalculations that ultimately set the conditions for the defeat of the Baathist Regime, there are three important aspects that should be noted. First, notwithstanding the wisdom of entering into conflicts the outcome of which were less than certain, the willingness to do so paid some dividends for Iraq. In the case of the Iran-Iraq war, though the cost to both sides was excessive considering the lack of tangible gains, the undertaking of this Arab-Persian conflict actually bolstered the Arab community's opinion of Saddam. Likewise, the continued defiance of his

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[120] Thomas Donnelly, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: A Strategic Assessment* (Washington: The AEI Press, 2004), 13.

[121] Ibid., 13.

[122] Ibid., 13.

regime in the face of UN sanctions and other Western pressures had much the same effect. Second, Saddam's ability to manipulate external opinion, be it within the Arab community or the West, was undeniably effective as witnessed by the willingness of the UN to relent on aspects of weapons inspections and the lack of international consensus on other issues of concern. Finally, in all things strategic, Saddam had shown a disdain for other powers, attacked any perceived weakness and actively sought confrontation. This would seem to belie the notion that his strategy, however ineffective it proved to be, was anything other than deliberate and considered.

Missed Conclusions

In conceiving of the Iraqi threat in a manner reminiscent of the First Gulf War, the United States made a strategic error. From the above analysis it is readily apparent that Iraq was not at all capable of engaging them in a conventional manner. The United States rightly observed that the Iraqi military, having been significantly degraded in the First Gulf War, suffered from a lack of training and poorly maintained equipment as a result of post-war embargoes while the Americans had undertaken the pursuit of the RMA. As Steven Metz states: "What had changed – and what eventually allowed a campaign very different from Desert Storm – was the effectiveness of the US military after a decade of reform and transformation".[124] Yet, it appears that no thought was given to the 'other-than-military' forces at play and what repercussions would ensue in the absence of the control of the Baathist Regime.

From the preceding analysis of factors in pre-OIF Iraq, a number of conclusions should have been extracted. It would appear intuitive that the existence of three fundamentally different portions of the population, two of which, the Shia and the Kurds, had lived for years under conditions of extreme repression, would be inclined to ensure their individual well-being. In a

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[123] Ibid., 14.

similar vein, the minority Sunnis, having long held positions of power, would not be amenable to loosing this influence. Likewise, tribes, absent the protection of the state yet armed and endowed with responsibilities that played to their historically rooted traditions of defined lands and associated status and privilege would also be wary of any situation which would undermine their position.

The distribution of the Iraqi population relative both to resources and other, sympathetic, populations and states should have also been cause for concern. The long standing sympathy of Iran for the oppressed Shia majority, a Kurdish movement which spans the borders of Iraq, Iran and Turkey, and the proximity of other decidedly anti-American states, such as Syria, should have served to highlight the possibility of external agitation. Further complicating the situation, the possession, by virtue of population density, of the majority of natural resources in the hands of those who had historically suffered the worst of Saddam's regime amounted to tangible prizes the control of which could be contested.

To the extent that Saddam had been successful in increasing his level of personal support within the Arab world or, at least, fomenting the belief that Iraq was unduly suffering at the hands of the American-led Western World, the United States should have been wary of the perception that any intervention in Iraq would create. The willingness of the United Nations to appease Iraq through the renegotiation of weapons inspections, while viewed by the United States as allowing a threat to security to burgeon, might better have been understood as the likelihood that the UN did not view Iraq in a similar light.

This, combined with the trend, internationally, of decreased support for sanctions and strikes in response to clear breaches of ceasefire agreements should have also underscored the

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[124] Steven Metz, "Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy," in *Presidential Policies and the Road to the Second Iraq War* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 263.

possibility that garnering support for any action against Iraq would be, at best, a delicate proposition. Concerning the United States' preference for multilateral action, Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman note, "…international cooperation infuses military action with legitimacy in the eyes of domestic and international audiences".[125] The implication, in this instance, is that a lack of international consensus on American military action against Iraq might well translate into a decrease in the perception of the act's legitimacy.

Finally, the United States should have been aware of the manner in which its contemporary military might was viewed:

> After the Gulf War, it became apparent to anyone watching that there was no longer a future in fighting conventional armies in conventional wars on conventional battlefields. This not only applies to nations like the United States, but also to any nation that can afford to field an army equipped with modern weaponry and training. Such a nation can be quite successful on the conventional battlefield. For issue organizations/groups, it becomes more difficult to do this…[126]

As the lone remaining superpower both the successes and failures of American intervention had been intensely scrutinized. While it had been made abundantly clear that in conventional combat the United States had no equal, the difficulties it had experienced in other forms of military intercession had, to those observing the United States as a potential opponent, underscored opportunities, "[t]he erosion of public support following the October 1993 deaths of 18 US servicemen in Mogadishu, and the enormous attention surrounding the June 1995 shoot-down of an American airman over Bosnia, demonstrate the strong influence that even low casualty levels

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[125] Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, "Defeating US Coercion," *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 108.

[126] Michael C. Fowler, *Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars: Insurgency and Modern Conflict* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2005), 5.

can exert on US policy".[127] Clearly, the weaknesses of the American way of war were not at all hidden to those who cared to look.

In summation, the United States should have at least had an inclination that Iraq, minus its oppressive regime, would not necessarily view any intervening power as liberators either in the short or long term. The complexity of the society, the geographic realities and the legacy of the politics and strategy of the regime made the country ripe both for insurgency focused upon the ouster of any invader and for internecine conflict amongst the greater population. Further, having no real recourse to conventional warfare given the resources and training that such methods of conflict require, the adoption of irregular methods would be the only real option for any group undertaking resistance. However, because of the myopia imposed by the American way of war and the RMA, the United States was blind to the potential for conflict that did not conform to its view.

The Insurgent Way of War

In order to demonstrate the disparity between the American way of war and that of the current and likely future threat, it is first necessary to examine the attributes of insurgent warfare. Although there is some doctrine concerning this subject, such as the writings of Mao and other noted revolutionaries, the motives behind the doctrine are not necessarily congruent with the goals of modern insurgents. Therefore, for the purpose of this discussion, the examination will be limited to those characteristics currently observed. Again, as examples are germane to the discussion, the case of Iraq will provide the basis.

Foremost, the insurgent style of warfare is *politically and strategically coherent*. Indeed, more than any other form of warfare, insurgency is perhaps the most direct extension of politics.

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[127] Daniel Byman and Matthew Waxman, "Defeating US Coercion,"…, 109.

At the heart of the insurgent group is the desire to attain some political goal no matter its feasibility. In this respect, the use of armed aggression has less to do with the military achievement of the goal but, rather, is focused upon creating the conditions necessary to enable the attainment of the political end state. Strategically, Iraqi insurgent groups have clearly shown their ability to directly link their military actions to political goals. Illustrative of this characteristic is the unifying purpose of the many diverse parties within the Sunni insurgency. That is, they are all united in their desire to expel the occupying coalition from Iraq.[128] While it is understood that this cannot be done along purely military lines, this has not precluded the insurgents from applying violence against emergent state infrastructure. Here, the application of military force has stymied coalition efforts to implement political, social, economic and other reforms. Likewise, insofar as the insurgents have chosen to attack the 'soft' military targets of the coalition, it has not been with the intent of causing their defeat. Instead the aim is to frustrate, to cause casualties and otherwise lower morale.[129]

In prosecuting their type of warfare, insurgents rely upon the tenets of *attrition*. Herein there are two components of note both of which are readily apparent within the Iraqi theatre. First is the realization that the insurgency will, of necessity, be conducted over a protracted period.[130] This is primarily due to the lack of equality in the opposing forces and the deduction that any military action must be aimed at wearing down rather than destroying, in detail, an opponent. Second is the notion that an inability to undertake decisive combat mandates the requirement both to play upon and create impressions across a large percentage of the

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[128] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*…, 178.

[129] Ibid., 178-179.

[130] Michael C. Fowler, *Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars: Insurgency and Modern Conflict*…, 60.

population. In itself this is an undertaking that is time intensive but also one that is better suited to the perception created through multiple short engagements rather than large decisive ones. This allows the insurgent groups to demonstrate that they are the ones in control of events and, theoretically, should undermine the population's belief in the security provided by an occupying force.[131]

To ensure the viability of the attritionist methodology, insurgencies must operate in a *dispersed* manner. The risk inherent in concentrating a small force is that it stands the risk of detection and, consequently, destruction. Conversely, the notion of dispersal offers many benefits to size-constrained forces. Chiefly it ensures that no one battle will determine the fate of the conflict. Likewise, it also implies that a small force will retain the ability to attack across the breadth of their area of operations. In turn, this creates the impression of control through broad effects.[132] Interestingly, the requirement to operate in a dispersed manner has mandated, in many cases, the adoption of decentralized organizations. While it has been noted that no insurgent group can truly be said to operate in a wholly decentralized manner, the notion of hierarchical control is much diminished under the characteristic of dispersal.[133] It is for this reason that organizations such as 'Al Qaeda in Iraq' continue to remain actively engaged in insurgent activities despite the removal of their titular leader.

In the conduct of military operations, insurgencies show a marked *lack of restraint*. In the most commonly thought of sense, insurgent groups are not beholden to international treaties, agreements or commonly recognized codes of conduct. However, the notion of a lack of

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[131] Ibid., 60.

[132] Ibid., 51.

[133] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*…, 154.

restraint is also meant to indicate that these groups are predisposed to execute violent action more often than is typically found in other forms of warfare.[134] This is attributable to the idea that insurgent groups will not actively seek to engage in decisive battle, but is also facilitated by the relatively low costs that attacks incur both in terms of personnel and pure finances.

Of necessity, insurgent warfare is characterized by relative *logistic simplicity*. Again, this idea is multi-faceted. In one sense, the inability of insurgents to operate sophisticated weapons of war frees them from the associated logistic requirements to arm, maintain and fuel such equipment. That is not to say that insurgent groups are not technologically sophisticated but, rather, they are generally limited to readily available wide-use technologies as opposed to specific military technologies. In another sense, however, the characterization of logistic simplicity is aimed at denoting the insurgents' familiarity with the geography and populations and their requirement to operate in a dispersed manner.[135] Here, the basic needs of insurgencies are limited to the easily obtained staples of life and the weapons and ammunition necessary to accomplishing their limited goals.

The last characteristic for the purposes of this discussion of insurgent warfare is *popular support*. This notion has both an internal and external component. Internal support equates directly to the support of the population. Indeed it is this aspect that is chiefly contested within the greater conflict and for this reason it is of prime concern to the achievement of the insurgency's goals. Ultimately it will be a state's population, in part or in whole, that either actively or tacitly supports the insurgent cause and thereby helps to elevate it to the political level. Likewise, as alluded to above, the logistical requirements of any insurgent group, though

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[134] Michael C. Fowler, *Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars: Insurgency and Modern Conflict*…, 12.

[135] Ibid., 9.

simple, are largely based upon the population's willingness to supply them.[136] Finally, a willing population provides the camouflage necessary for insurgents to disperse and conceal. In a very real sense any insurgency lacking support, specifically that support offered by the population of the state in which they are conducting operations, will find itself in jeopardy.

External support, though conceivably of less than vital importance to an insurgency is, nevertheless, highly desired for the advantages it offers. Unlike occupying forces, insurgent groups may make use of neighbouring states as sources of resupply, refuge and recruiting. While the likelihood that states will offer open and public support to an insurgency is very low, clandestine assistance or a policy of ignoring the spontaneous support of their citizens amounts to the same thing from the viewpoint of the insurgents.[137]

Comparing Ways of War – Shortcomings Revealed

Having characterized both the American and insurgent ways of war, it remains to undertake their relative assessment. While it is appealing to assert that irregular warfare, as embodied within the insurgent way of war, exists as the antithesis to conventional warfare, this is not necessarily the case. It is, however, correct to state that the American way of war, and its facilitation through the RMA, is all but negated by that of the insurgent way. Comparing directly the various characteristics of the two styles will serve to underscore the dissimilarities and, consequently the shortcomings of the American way.

In conceiving of the use of military power as primarily a *problem-solving* mechanism, no matter the hesitancy attributed to its commitment, the United States has positioned itself poorly for engagement with insurgencies. The key deficiency is that insurgency, in and of itself, is not a

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[136] Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*…, 131.

[137] Ibid., 135 - 137.

'problem' to be solved; it only appears that way when viewed through the myopic lens of the American way of war.[138] As such, though it may seem logical to overpower violent means with greater violence, this can provide no definitive outcome to the situation. An insurgency is more appropriately conceived of as a symptom of some greater, root problem, the true nature of which may be determined from the other than military factors such as have been earlier described.

To again use the case of Iraq to illustrate, the insurgent 'problem' is perhaps best described as the competition of a number of socially, religiously and culturally distinct populations vying for preeminence, if not mere survival, within a state suddenly bereft of brutal central rule. This is a complex situation and one which is simply not suited to a purely, or even mostly, military solution. To be sure, the military has a necessary role in restoring security to the effected population either as a pre-condition to, or simultaneous operation within, a greater effort. The root(s) of the 'problem' are, indeed, more appropriately addressed using those mechanisms of power that can directly effect them.

Because the problem lies within other than military factors, any attempts at problem resolution would require the unified interaction of all major aspects of grand strategy of the United States.[139] Unfortunately, this is contrary both to the *apolitical* and *astrategic* characteristics of the American way of war. In the first instance, the attempt at problem solving is hobbled by its lack of cohesion. It is fare to say that the United States is cognizant of the requirement to address the myriad of issues. Within Iraq one readily observes the engagement of a wide range of national organizations. However, the distinctive flavour of the occupation, despite this engagement, is military.

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[138] Colin S. Gray, *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?…,* 34.

[139] Ibid., 31.

In the second instance, the American tradition of superiority, both in manpower and machinery, and historical absence of dialogue between the military elite and policy makers, has ensured that a marked lack of strategic acumen has collided with a strategically attuned opponent.[140] The military actions of the insurgents are, by design, directly aimed at achieving a *strategically coherent* effect. "[T]hey plan their operations in such a way that mere execution of the action achieves some form of the political goal".[141] It is for this reason that the killing of an Iraqi insurgent by the United States amounts to an infinitesimal increase in the precondition of achieving the greater security of the population, whereas the death of an American soldier at the hands of the insurgents directly effects the population's sense of security as well as the morale of American soldiers and the resolve of American society.

All of this would seem to mitigate against any way of war that incorporates *impatience* within it. As has been remarked upon earlier, an irregular enemy, lacking both the size and material resources necessary to engage in conventional warfare, is forced into having to fight over an extended period:

> Unless the irregular makes a truly irreversible political error, swift and decisive success against him, let alone some facsimile of victory, simply is not attainable. The center of gravity in irregular warfare, which is to say the local people and their allegiance, cannot be seized and held by dramatic military action.[142]

In this respect, the insurgency's ability to conduct the protracted combat inherent in their *attritionist* style has become a weapon unto itself.[143] Again, it would not be accurate to depict

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[140] Ibid., 32.

[141] Michael C. Fowler, *Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars: Insurgency and Modern Conflict*…, 13.

[142] Colin Gray. *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*…, 45.

[143] Ibid., 44.

that this lesson is entirely lost upon the United States. Both the military and certain other public figures have come to refer to aspects of the current situation as "the long war".[144] The real question, however, is how long the American public and politicians will countenance conflict.

The *attritionist* method of insurgency is facilitated through their ability to operate freely, to the extent that their cooperation can be ensured, among segments of the population. In turn, this allows them to adopt a *dispersed* posture. The notion of dispersion has profound consequences for the American way of war. O*ffensive focus* provides the best example. American military tradition, as with most Western militaries, holds that the offence is the decisive military operation in war. However, because offensive action, in the modern American context, also equates directly to the interrelated *technological dependence* and *firepower focus* that characterize the American way, this conceptualization holds two perils when applied against insurgencies.

The first peril lies both in the application and likely consequences of any offensive actions. Offensive power, no matter how precise its application, will usually result in some form of destruction. In turn, this equates to a certain amount of damaged infrastructure and loss of life.[145] Ironically, the technology and firepower that has done so well in replacing American soldiers on the battlefield and otherwise reducing their number of casualties has also served to isolate the American military from the populations with which it must interact. More pointedly, the effects of technology and firepower are often responsible for turning public and political

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[144] Washingtonpost.com, "Rumsfeld Offers Strategy for Current War," http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202296.html; Internet; accessed 10 April 2007.

[145] Colin Gray. *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?*…, 41.

opinion away from the United States, both within the theatre of operations and domestically, notwithstanding their intentions of augmenting the security of the population.[146]

This outcome is well known, indeed planned upon, by the insurgents who camouflage themselves among the population. Since the insurgents feel no particular need to show *restraint* in either their methods or actions, they achieve a distinct advantage over their more narrowly constrained opponents. Any force, given such a situation, will be obliged to decide between the equally unpalatable choices of acting with the potential of causing an effect contrary to that intended, or not acting and letting the situation further degrade. Resultantly, the insurgent way of war has effectively negated the majority of the benefits associated with the offensive application of technology and firepower.[147]

Likewise, the belief in the effectiveness of technology and firepower has also served to foster the belief that these advancements may actually replace soldiers on the ground. However, the requirement to interact actively with the local population to not only ensure their security but also to gain their trust, is a decidedly manpower-intensive activity. This being the case, the United States' decision to follow the path of technology over increased size has not necessarily proven wise.

As has been discussed previously, one of the driving reasons behind the favoritism accorded to technology within the American way of war was the prospect it offered to satisfy the demands of warfare within a *casualty sensitive* context. However, the ability of the insurgent way of war to negate the effects of firepower and technology necessitates the requirement for soldiers to interact directly with the population. It also increases greatly their vulnerability to an

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[146] Ibid., 42.

[147] Ibid., 38.

insurgent enemy. The United States is again forced to contend with a dilemma within their way of war. Either the US military can retreat from the population and seek to exploit technology and firepower to their detriment, or they are forced to accept the possibility of increased casualties.[148] Taken in total, these realizations do not bode well for the future of the RMA.

The second peril of offensive action is its conceptualization as a framework for victory. Plainly stated, any operational concept in which this type of action is negated is not, theoretically, capable of winning. However, because insurgents operate among a population and in a dispersed manner, they are able to conduct attacks across a broad frontage. The desired affect is at once to demonstrate the vulnerability of the opposition and to either gain or retain the initiative. The corollary is that the United States cannot truly be said to be on the offensive. Indeed, they are most often seen to be in a defensive, reactionary position. This is, necessarily, a situation that causes great concern for two reasons. It is primarily a concern because it offers a condition entirely discordant with the American way of war. However, in offering this condition it underscores the related concern that actions will be undertaken for the sole purpose of reverting to a 'winning' formula. Here, the risk of offensive action negatively impacting upon the population is all the more probable.

It has been earlier mentioned that technology and firepower have served to reduce the amount of soldiers available for the United States to prosecute conflicts in that their effects are replacing those historically created by *mass* forces. The United States has realized the requirement for mass in battling the insurgency in Iraq.[149] There is, however, a balance that must be maintained within this characteristic. That is that the forces given to combat the insurgency

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[148] Ibid., 48-49.

[149] CNN.com, "Gates Visits Iraq Amid Questions Over Troop Increases," http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/12/20/iraq.main/index.html; Internet; accessed 10 April 2007.

must be sufficient in number to the task and yet not so large as to fuel the perception of an occupation vice intervention.[150] The concern, in this respect, is that occupations often promote, or make ripe for allegation, the impression of public officials and institutions being solely accountable to the occupying force.

Similar concerns must be voiced over the conundrum of the characteristic of *logistic excellence*. Essentially, a certain quality and quantity of logistic support is entirely crucial to the successful execution of any expeditionary endeavour. However, much like the troop-to-technology issue, the logistically intensive nature of the transforming United States military also comes at the expense of general-purpose soldiers.[151] Compounding the problem is the requirement for increased security on these often mission-essential resources.

Just as technology may hinder the necessary interaction between soldiers and the population, so too may logistics. As the duration of any mission extends, the tendency will be to provide greater comforts to the deployed troops. Herein lies the prospect that the distinctly foreign culture of the United States will become increasingly evident. This will only serve to highlight differences that can have, or be exploited to create, a divisive effect. All of this stands in stark contrast to the insurgent characteristic of *logistic simplicity*. Whereas the United States is beholden to a long and, in certain respects, tenuous supply line, insurgents draw directly from sympathetic populations. In this regard, they have direct contact with a population that enables their operations. Conversely, the United States must largely view logistic issues as a constraint.

Finally, some mention of the characterization of the American way of war as being *ahistoric* must be made. Any consternation that United States feels in its engagement with

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[150] Colin Gray. *Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy: Can the American Way of War Adapt?…*, 39.

[151] Ibid., 47.

insurgencies is directly attributable to ignoring, actively or otherwise, historical examples.[152] The United States does have a military history rich with examples of insurgent warfare. Indeed, it was through its experiences with an insurgent enemy in Vietnam that many of the factors contributing to the MR crystallized. That it has failed to take advantage of these references is, arguably, the chief reason they find themselves less than well prepared currently. On the contrary, the history of American warfare has not been lost on others: "Many people in many places have absorbed the lesson of the last 60 years that in a conventional war few can stand against America, and some of them…adopted the course of insurgency".[153] Likewise, insurgents, such as those operating within Iraq, have in many instances leveraged their own history to distinct advantage:

> Traditional societies do not have standing professional armies in the Western sense. Rather, all men of age in a tribe, clan, or communal group learn through societal norms and legacies to fight in specific ways, and to fight well, if required.[154]

Clearly, the insurgent way of war enjoys distinct advantages over that of the American way. This, combined with the likely realization by those not capable of offering a credible conventional counter to the United States' military power that irregular warfare is not only an effective option but their only viable option, two deductions become apparent. First, there can be little doubt that the insurgent threat will be enduring, if not increasing. Second, the United States is obliged to find a method of dealing effectively with insurgencies if for no other reason than to ensure the relevance of its military power.

Conclusion

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[152] Ibid., 33.

[153] Michael C. Fowler, *Amateur Soldiers, Global Wars: Insurgency and Modern Conflict*…, 60.

[154] Richard H. Schultz and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Combat*…, 262.

During the decades of 1960 and 1970, the United States experienced a period of significant turmoil. Through the analysis of the social, political, strategic and geographic factors of the day, the extent of that upheaval has been highlighted. True to the Tofflers' notion of MRs, the United States experienced the culmination of these significant 'other-than-military' factors as the requirement to re-conceptualize the manner in which it conceived of, and prosecuted war. In doing so, however, it used as a point of reference its chief rival of the time, the Soviet Union. Moreover, it laboured under the assumption that high-intensity conventional warfare would endure. Belief in the premise of conventional warfare, wherein two similarly trained and equipped forces would engage in combat to definitively determine the outcome of an issue, engendered two problems.

Primarily, it hindered the United States' ability to appropriately interpret the MR. That is to say, that constraining its view of warfare to the conventional likewise constrained its ability to re-conceptualization the manner in which wars are fought. The discussion of the notion of the 'new American way of war' within this paper has underscored the fact that although some aspects have evolved, such as the characteristics of impatience, casualty sensitivity and, arguably, the extent of technological dependence, little substantial change has taken place. Indeed, the United States has not fundamentally altered its historic conception of war and, therefore, remains possessed of one that faces significant challenges.

Secondly, in seeking a technological solution, in the form of the RMA, to the issues presented through the narrowly interpreted MR, the United States has created conditions that limit the potential of this technology to the paradigm in which it was conceived. There can be no doubt that in the realm of conventional warfighting the United States is without peers. Its performance in the First Gulf War, Kosovo, the initial invasion of Afghanistan and the

conventional portion of the Second Gulf War are all proof of American military superiority in the conventional sense. Similar claims, however, cannot be made concerning irregular, insurgent warfare.

This paper has made use of the case of Iraq to illustrate the depth of the problems confronting the United States. First, by conducting a limited analysis of, again, the social, political, strategic and geographic factors of Iraq it has been shown that the United States, but for their myopic view, should well have anticipated the likelihood of an insurgency. Second, and of perhaps greater importance, through a comparison of the American and insurgent ways of war, it has demonstrated the lack of applicability that both the American way of war and its technological enabler, the RMA, has to this contemporary threat.

Having interpreted the MR, and its consequently reformulated way of war, in the context of high-intensity conventional conflict, the United States has made a grave error. Because this context has little in common with the current threat both the American way of war and the RMA have been rendered largely ineffective. Not only has the United States established for itself a way of war that is stymied but, by pursuing a similarly constrained RMA, it has traveled a fair distance down a path whose direction seems increasingly uncertain.

The decisions that need be taken to rectify this situation are not enviable. Fundamental to the resolution of the issue is a further re-conception of the manner in which the United States chooses to employ its military power. In the face of a strategically coherent adversary and in a contest to win the support of a population, both domestically and abroad, the United States can ill afford to presume that the military is its primary international problem-solving mechanism. A unified application of all appropriate aspects of national power must be formulated.

Likewise, the United States must seek, again, to reformulate its way of war within a more general framework. Necessarily this will not be an easy task, as it will require the alteration of long-enduring characteristics. While it may well be possible for the military leadership and policy makers to enter into a meaningful, holistic, dialogue to reverse the apolitical and ahistoric characterizations, other changes may prove more daunting. Halting RMA related expenditures and transformational policies in favour of increased manpower, for example, would assuredly meet with significant bureaucratic resistance. Similarly, effectively inculcating within the American public and politicians an understanding of the need for patience may well be impossible.

What is most disconcerting is the dilemma posed by any resolution to the situation. That is that both in the absence of fundamental change or, conversely, the admission of inappropriate means, the difficulties that the United States faces will only embolden potential foes. Notwithstanding, measures must be taken to provide an effective solution to this problem if the United States wishes to remain engaged across the breadth of its stated vital interests.

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