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INTERMEDIATE WARFARE AND INSURGENCY: AN INVESTIGATION OF AMERICA'S WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This paper is about the need to understand the concept of victory in contemporary conflict. In particular, it studies American involvement in Afghanistan in an attempt to identify why limited wars present such a success-defining conundrum for statesmen, their societies and their soldiers. It looks at the events that drew the United States into the war in Afghanistan and explores the implications of the political rhetoric that followed, particularly as it relates to the pursuit of military outcomes. This paper will explain how the war being prosecuted in Afghanistan by the United States is neither limited nor total, but rather an intermediate blend of the two which has made fighting this war particularly difficult. Consequently, this paper examines the political relationships that create intermediate warlike commitments and presents a plausible methodology for fighting Afghanistan-like conflicts in the future. The paper will conclude by arguing that the best way to defeat an insurgency is not to overwhelm the enemy regime with manoeuvre and firepower, but to be a better insurgency and in so doing undermine and defeat the target regime from within.

> Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war – to the defeat of the global terror network.
>
> - George W. Bush
> Address to a Joint Session of Congress following 9/11

BACKGROUND

On September 11th 2001, everything changed. For the first time since Pearl Harbour, the United States (US) was attacked on home soil and, like the day that would live in infamy, the attack was undeclared and unexpected. Most threateningly, however, was the fact that the terrorist assault violated US sovereignty and as such was an affront to the US' defence and intelligence departments. Something needed to be done, but what?

In the days and weeks that followed, President George W. Bush engaged the people of the US, and the world, with dramatic speeches replete with notions of a global threat and sabre rattling rhetoric. On the 20th of September 2001, the President addressed a Joint Session of Congress and made a number of demands of the Taliban regime. The US wanted the Taliban to hand over al Qaeda or "share in their fate."[1] Al Qaeda had taken responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, and decisive US action would not only serve to deter governments from supporting terrorist groups, but would arguably eliminate the immediate threat posed by the Al Qaeda contingent training and operating out of Afghanistan.

[1] Bush's speech to the Joint Session of Congress following 9/11 attacks, 20 September 2001.

However, President Bush did not limit his speech to the organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks; rather, he globalized and arguably "polarized" the threat.[2] Bush stipulated that the enemy was not isolated to Afghanistan, but that it was "a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them."[3] The US' concept of a globalized enemy dramatically magnified and convoluted the notion of what needed to be fought. The stakes were clear: freedom. Yet even the President's constant messaging about the challenge to not just US but global freedom was ambiguous and arguably unsubstantiated.

On October 7, 2001, the US attacked Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan, and in spite of some predictions of failure, the US military was able to achieve its initial campaign objectives of unseating the Taliban regime and damaging the Al Qaeda network.[4] Within two months, the Taliban had dispersed and American political focus began to look beyond the borders of Afghanistan to Iraq. With no expectation or indication of what success or victory was meant to look like in Afghanistan, the US left 10 000 soldiers to uphold the terms of the Bonn Agreement as well as seek out and destroy any Taliban forces still present throughout a country of 647 500 square kilometres and 28 million people.[5] And, while the Taliban threat seemed to be

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[2] Mary Kaldor, "American Power: From 'Compellance' to Cosmopolitanism?" *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 79, no. 1 (Jan., 2003), 4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3095538.

[3] Bush's speech to the Joint Session of Congress following 9/11 attacks, 20 September 2001.

[4] Thomas X. Hames, *The Sling and The Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2006), 153.

[5] Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post War Governance, Security and U.S. Policy* (New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2008), 10.

eliminated, the ambiguity of what was meant to be achieved in the beleaguered country left the US and its Afghan allies vulnerable to Taliban and Al Qaeda resurgence.

AN AMERICAN VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

This paper is about the need to understand the concept of victory in contemporary conflict. In particular, it will study American involvement in Afghanistan in an attempt to identify why limited wars present such a success-defining conundrum for statesmen, their societies and finally their soldiers. It will look at the events that drew the United States into the war in Afghanistan and explore the implications of the political rhetoric that followed, particularly as they relate to the pursuit of military outcomes. This introductory chapter will argue that ambiguous political oratory is making it difficult for American soldiers to win in Afghanistan because it blurs the distinction between limited and total war. The resulting intermediate commitment has forced the military to adjust how it fights and as such has had an impact on how contemporary Afghanistan-like insurgencies need to be fought if a recognizable victory is to be achieved.

VICTORY IN MODERN CONFLICT

> The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish […] 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.
>
> - Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*[6]

[6] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. And trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88.

Your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars.
- General Douglas MacArthur[7]

Victory in contemporary conflict is difficult to define, yet, as stated by MacArthur, it must remain the primary objective of any nation involved in war. Modern conflict has challenged the conceptual definitions of warfare and winning. This has most notably been the case since the end of the Cod War. Military theorist Martin van Creveld suggests that modern wars will not be inter-state, but instead "warfare between ethnic and religious groups."[8] He goes on to write that modern wars will rarely see regular forces fighting against one another; rather, at least one side will be seen as a non-state actor in the shape of terrorists, insurgents, guerrillas or even criminals.[9] Professor David Kilcullen, builds on van Creveld's idea and in so doing helps to express the magnitude of this phenomenon in the post-9/11 era.

Kilcullen explains that the globalization of radical Islamic thought and action is indicative of "non-state actors."[10] He believes that the current global *jihad* declared by Al Qaeda is in fact a global insurgency designed to unify dispersed Islamic conflicts through communications, finances and technology.[11] If this truly is the case, the implications are staggering. Does the western world, and in particular the US, possess the requisite resolve or capability to defeat a borderless enemy, with an unquantifiable number of recruits and a decentralized command and control network?

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[7] Douglas MacArthur Farewell Speech given to the Corps of Cadets at Westpoint, May 12, 1962.

[8] Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), ix.

[9] *Ibid.,* 20.

[10] David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August 2005): 597.

[11] *Ibid.,* 604.

The US has developed one of the most powerful conventional-war-winning militaries in the history of the world. This was done in the interest of being able to "preserve the dominant US global position, including its military position, which [is] understood to be an essential underpinning of global activism."[12] Though clear in a conventional war-fighting context, this says little about achieving victory against a global insurgency, which would satisfy if it were indicative of the majority of immediate threats - but it is not.

Kalevi Holsti writes that in the post-1945 period 18-20 per cent of over 160 cases of war have been inter-state in nature.[13] Thus, 80 per cent have been intra-state and as such, the more common condition for contemporary warfare. If it can be agreed that warfare is changing and that the majority of future wars will follow current trends as being predominantly intra-state, then it is not difficult to accept that the manner by which victory is defined or achieved needs to be revisited. However, as cited above, when George W. Bush made his unconditional demands of the Taliban in the days following 9/11, his prose reflected what can only be described as "total war rhetoric," a subject that will factor prominently in the next chapter.

A total war victory demands that the "defeated nation [fall] prostrate before the victor yielding all, its army, its economy, its very existence."[14] This type of triumph brings to mind such situations as German Foreign Minister Ulrich Graf von Brockdorff-

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[12] Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 28, no.1 (Summer, 2003): 6; http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137574; Internet; accessed 4 January 2010.

[13] Kalevi J. Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22-24.

[14] Richard Hobbs, *The Myth of Victory: What Is Victory in War?* (Colorado: Westview Press Inc., 1979), 63.

Rantzau signing the treaty of Versailles after World War I, or Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu's signing the Japanese Instrument of Surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay to end World War II. Yet, any expectation that this type of victory could be achieved against either the Taliban or Al Qaeda is unrealistic. How does the US defeat an enemy that is not necessarily linked to geography or a particular nation state, but rather an idea?

Thus, the call to "defeat the global terror network" is a declaration of action against an intangible threat, which easily confuses the concept of winning.[15] It is impractical to believe that an ideology based antagonist, whose forces transcend borders, cultures and even continents, will ever be able to cede defeat unless the combined will of their institution is broken. And, in considering the way the war in Afghanistan is currently being prosecuted, this outcome is most unlikely. So what needs to be done to win?

The first objective of this paper will be to classify and study the concepts of total and limited war. Colin S. Gray, a Professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies writes that "often only a fine line separates a necessary precision in language from the malady of scholarly pedantry."[16] Yet, to fully understand how victory is to be defined or achieved in contemporary conflict and in particular in Afghanistan, it is important to develop an appreciation for the intricacies of conflict type and magnitude. As Clausewitz writes above, it is important to establish the type of war upon which the state is embarking. Following the study of total and limited war, it will be possible to discern the

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[15] Kilcullen, *Countering Global Insurgency*…, 597.

[16] Colin S. Gray, Recognizing and Understanding Revolutionary Change in Warfare: The Sovereignty of Context (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006), 3.

qualities of each as they relate to conflict termination. This is relevant to chapter two's investigation of how the US has fought and attempted to conclude its war in Afghanistan.

Chapter two will apply a model proposed by Professor Robert Mandel to help discern the differences between premodern total war success and modern limited war success. Through Mandel's Model, the paper will introduce and develop the idea that the US' engagement in Afghanistan is neither total nor limited in character but in fact "intermediate." Chapter Two will conclude by recognizing that if it is possible to understand how the US' war in Afghanistan became intermediate, then it may be possible to leverage this understanding in a manner that will help to win future Afghanistan-like wars.

Chapter three will build on the previous chapter to develop an understanding of how the US is obliged to fight contemporary wars. This chapter will look at some of the more prominent issues that face the US military as it attempts to win a total war victory within limited war constraints; notably, the interaction between American society, the government and its military. Chapter three will conclude by arguing that COIN wars are extremely difficult and complex and to win in an insurgency environment, the US must accept its social, governmental and military limitations. Thus, this chapter will set the conditions for chapter four's proposition for how the US could fight Afghanistan-like conflicts in the future.

Chapter four will propose that the best way to defeat an intra-state insurgent force is to be a better insurgency. This chapter will apply counterfactual analysis to fully recognize the implications of the American constraints introduced in previous chapters. Additionally, this chapter will assimilate the lessons of the previous chapters to generate

a proposal for future intra-state conflict. Finally, the suggested method for prosecuting Afghanistan-like wars, though radical, will capture the need to not only win in the eyes of the American people, but concurrently achieve a recognizable victory in the minds of the indigenous population and most importantly the enemy.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ROAD TO INTERMEDIATE WAR

The war currently being fought in Afghanistan presents the United States with a conundrum. Does the US invest itself into an ideological total war against religious extremism? Or, does it fight a limited and protracted war with a view to seeking acceptable terms with its sworn enemies? The sad reality is that the US is holistically capable of neither. Political rhetoric, social unrest and military mission schizophrenia have all challenged and eroded the US' ability to properly identify what it is that it is meant to be achieving in Afghanistan. To fully grasp the reigns of victory, the US must first classify the nature and magnitude of the conflict in which it is engaged. In so doing, it should be possible to identify what is meant to be achieved and what the US is willing to sacrifice to achieve it. This chapter will examine the intricacies of limited and total war to establish a basis for each type of warfare.

This chapter will begin by defining and discussing the concepts of limited and total war. It will investigate the qualities of each type of warfare and examine how the scope, objectives and character of the two make them inherently different from one another.[17] Thus, limited and total forms of warfare must be compared, contrasted and discussed before the terms can be related to the US' involvement in Afghanistan.

LIMITED WAR

Limited wars have been fought throughout history with a view to achieving limited objectives. However, since the introduction of atomic weapons, US engagement

[17] Robert McClintock, *The Meaning of Limited War* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1967), 197.

in limited warfare has been for the pragmatic purpose of applying military pressure to achieve a political effect without triggering a nuclear holocaust.[18] This created a post-1945 warfare schism. With the proliferation of nuclear weapons, limited war techniques took on a multitude of styles and names that included: proxy, covert, guerrilla, net or cyber-centric, insurgency, war of liberation, counterinsurgent, postmodern, counterterrorist, low intensity conflict, asymmetric and 4th generation.

Limited war or limited engagement in contemporary conflict is a politically and psychologically palatable form of warfare for the US. While total war demands that the nation be absorbed or involved in conflict for its survival, US involvement in limited war is the result of a decision to support or project US values abroad without implicating the whole of the domestic population. Limited conflicts are the result of a national or political desire to intervene at a time of its choosing, with a pre-determined force package, for a restricted duration.[19] American involvement in Korea, the Iraq war of 1991 and Kosovo are all examples of this type of political will and public acceptance for limiting involvement in conflict. However, this type of conflict can still be very politically challenging.

At the onset of a limited war there is commonly a social acceptance and understanding of the threat and what the conflict is meant to achieve; otherwise there would be little political incentive to get involved in the first place. From a Western perspective, volunteer militaries, coupled with a nearly unmatched advantage in technology, have in a sense romanticized modern limited war. Postmodern thinker and

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[18] Jasjit Singh, "Dynamics of Limited War," *Strategic Analysis*, 24 (October 2000) [journal on-line]; available from http://ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_oct00sij01.html; Internet; accessed 03 January 2010.

[19] Hobbs, *The Myth of* Victory…, 284.

writer, Chris Hables Gray writes, "[p]ostmodern war isn't horrible at all … for most of us."[20] This is the real luxury that societies engaged in limited wars have. They have chosen the conditions of their involvement and have only committed the willing to the conflict. Moreover, they can watch from afar and rejoice in their military and technological dominance without the threat of being killed themselves. A society's ability to watch the developments of war from afar through the lens of a soldier's helmet mounted camera, a pilot's air dropped smart bomb or the lifeless lens of an unmanned aerial vehicle makes war more akin to a virtual simulator and has "transformed war into something like a spectator sport."[21]

Chris Hables Gray reflects upon the common American perspective during the First Gulf War, "[w]e were dazzled as well, with horror, or awe, or even pleasure, or all of these at once."[22] The manner in which Western society viewed limited war in the years leading-up to entanglement in Afghanistan made combat something that happened abroad and provided a form of obtuse entertainment. And, as a result of strong economies, advances in technology, and volunteer armies, limited war in light of the fact that it was war, was tolerable. However, unlike total war, limited war is conditional, and this has an enormous impact on society's acceptance of what victory will look like, and what it is willing to tolerate to achieve it. Thus, when limited wars become protracted and casualty rates begin to rise, the democratic public can become less accepting of the cause.

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[20] Chris H. Gray, *Postmodern War* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), 45.

[21] Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Toronto: Pengruin Group, 2000), 191.

[22] Gray, *Postmodern War*…, 44.

Since limited war is seen as an instrument of foreign policy to achieve limited political objectives, Western societies have proven to be far less willing to lose soldiers or accept military recklessness in order to achieve victory. This is due to the fact that there is not always a clear, tangible or immediate threat to the citizens at home. Robert J. Art, a professor of International Relations and US Foreign Policy, identifies this form of US intervention or warfare as "selective engagement."[23] Art's term perfectly captures the US' notion of limited warfare in the post-1945 period. It exemplifies the fact that limited wars are wars of choice and as such not conflicts that must taken-up in the defence of national sovereignty. This has a dramatic impact on how much the people of the US are willing to sacrifice to achieve what can only be described as limited objectives in the pursuit of national interests rather than national defence imperatives. Consequently, whether formally stated or not, the acceptance to get involved in a limited conflict is conditional. The US' intervention in Somalia provides an excellent example of this phenomenon.

The US' primary objectives that led to the intervention in Somalia were humanitarian in nature, and inside of a month, the mission's core objectives had been achieved.[24] Namely, the region in which the US was operating was stabilized and US forces were able to enforce a ceasefire and work towards food delivery operations and small impact projects.[25] It has been argued by Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney that the US intervention was able to stave-off a humanitarian crisis by the time it handed

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[23] Robert J. Art, *Grand Strategy for America*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 6.

[24] Dominic Johnson and D. Tierney, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Victory and Defeat in US Military Operations," in *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War*, ed. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 46-76 (London: Routledge, 2007), 56.

[25] *Ibid.,* 56.

the mission over to the United Nation (UN) in May of 1993.[26] Yet, while the limited objectives were achieved, this US mission is remembered as a brutal failure. Why?

The nature of the US mission changed dramatically when the humanitarian aspect of the operation was handed over to the UN. The US' new mission under the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNISOM II) was a Chapter 7 "peace-making" mission which saw the Americans with dramatically altered objectives. The new mission focused on ending the civil war in Somalia and the development of a democratic method of governance.[27] This evolution of the force's originally stated objective is a classic example of "mission creep." American soldiers had been deployed to Somalia with a view to ending a humanitarian crisis, and on most accounts, that objective had been achieved. Yet, now the soldiers were being asked to take on a far more challenging mandate with no immediate enhancements in soldiers, training or equipment. Additions to troop strength and capability were only provided after four US soldiers were killed by a remote-detonated bomb in August of 1993. In response to the attack President Bill Clinton sent 400 Special Forces soldiers to the theatre to help apprehend Somali Warlord General Mohamed Farah Aidid, believed to be responsible for the bomb blast and in charge of some of the larger Mogadishu Militias.

What followed were a series of raids designed to capture the Warlord and some of his most senior lieutenants, however, that aspect of the story is often set aside to focus on what is know as the Battle for Mogadishu. During one ill fated raid, two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and US soldiers were forced to fight their way to the crash sites to secure the helicopters and rescue survivors. Inside of a twenty-four hour period,

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[26] *Ibid.,* 55.

[27] *Ibid.,* 56.

18 US soldiers were killed and seventy-eight wounded while fighting in the streets of Mogadishu. Conversely, estimates have Somali dead at 312 with 814 wounded.[28] Perhaps more caustic, however, was the fact that one US pilot had been taken hostage and the body of a dead US soldier was captured on video being pulled through the streets by a Somali mob. In direct response to these events, US public support for the mission turned and President Clinton issued a deadline for the operation. The US forces were meant to leave Somalia by 31 March 1994 but managed to extricate its forces nearly a month ahead of the projected date.[29]

Somalia serves as an excellent example of the challenging dynamic that accompanies limited engagements and the constraints within which a nations' public expects its military to operate. Senior military officials originally opposed intervention in Somalia because of a lack of clear measures of success.[30] Additionally, the US military requested a larger number of soldiers to achieve the mandate that they expected would consist of stabilizing the key cities in the country. This was not to be the case.

American public and Western sentiment was such that an intervention was warranted to help stop the children of Somalia from starving and to eliminate the threat of Somali clansmen that were responsible for stealing UN relief supplies. Yet, in spite of the moral desire to get involved in Somalia to halt the humanitarian crisis, it would appear that the even the US' morals and values were conditional upon the relative safety of its soldiers. Had the US been involved in a total war upon which the sovereignty of

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[28] Lester H. Brune, *The United States and Post Cold War Interventions* (Claremont: Regina Books, 1998), 32.

[29] Peter A. Huchthausen, *America's Splendid Little Wars: A Short History of U.S. Military Engagements: 1975-2000* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 182.

[30] *Ibid.,* 170.

the nation was at stake, history would suggest that the loss of a few soldiers would not have been enough to break the will of the US government. Thus, the condition by which the US was willing to immerse itself in Somalia would appear to be dependent upon a very limited tolerance for losing soldier. Perhaps in this vein limited war or conflict could even be expressed as "conditional" war. Where the condition could be recognized as the intervening military's center-of-gravity which, once broken will result in the dissolution of the mission and its commitment to the conflict.

TOTAL WAR

In contrast to limited war, total war should be understood as warfare where the absolute political, social and military might of a nation or alliance is brought to bear against its adversary. Thus, if a nation is involved in a total war, the conflict is not restricted to the front line soldiers that must fight to impose political will on the enemy. Total wars often draw on the entire might of a nation to win and demands that the citizenry at home contribute to the conflict both through its economy and industry. This is necessary to build the weapons of war and sustain the field forces. Since civilian participation is critical to the sustainment of the war effort, modern total wars have seen civilian populations targeted to reduce an antagonist's ability to fight. Such was the case in World War I, where unrestricted submarine warfare was employed against merchant shipping lanes, or World War II where strategic bombing became a method for breaking the spirits of civilian populations.[31] In these instances, the enemy's populations were

[31] Stewart Halsey Ross, Strategic Bombing by the United States in World War II: The Myths and the Facts (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2003), 177.

considered to be legitimate military target which made these wars inherently more total in nature. This had a protracted impact on the perceived threat to sovereignty.

A distinct difference between total and limited wars is often what is at stake and what victory is meant to look like upon completion of the conflict. For a nation to be engaged in a total war, the sovereignty or solvency of the nation will generally be at risk. Meanwhile, the objective in a total war is "to remove completely the enemy government or even to extinguish any trace of the enemy as a separate nation."[32] The conceptual absolutes of both the threat to one's own nation and the need to achieve a most complete victory against an enemy is what makes the war total in nature. French philosopher and political scientist Raymond Aron explains this phenomenon as having a "hyperbolic"[33] effect. He writes,

> Did the people of different countries fight to the death because they detested each other, or did they detest each other because they fought so furiously? Did the belligerents set themselves unlimited objectives from the outset, or did they acquire those objectives in proportion to the increase in violence?[34]

Without a constant dialogue between rival nations, it is easy to understand how even the most subtle clashes can grow beyond initially intended limits. If the hyperbolic nature of conflict can be understood as the philosophical and conceptual escalation of perceived or actual threat in relation to actions, then it is possible to develop a sense for how even limited conflicts can grow into total wars.

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[32] Hobbs, *The Myth of* Victory…, 59.

[33] Raymond Aron, *The Century of Total War* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1954), 19.

[34] *Ibid.,* 24-25.

Van Creveld suggests that World War I began like "any other, a limited 'cabinet war' for limited ends."[35] However, when the initial manoeuvres and clashes failed to yield a decisive armed victory, the industrial age's ability to influence the war was called upon to spur armies towards success. Mass mobilization of the military was made possible by the complementary growth and industrialization of "agriculture, raw materials, transportation, finance, technical-scientific talent, and every other kind of resource."[36] A country's ability to draw on, not only the political and military will, but also the social, technological and industrial wealth of the nation to win made war more socially inclusive and in a sense, more personal.

Thus, total wars were not just fought by soldiers, but also by the citizens at home. The social understanding that the war was being fought as part of an "us against them" struggle helped to vilify the enemy and develop a "passionate and emotional belief in the virtue of one's cause and the demonic nature of one's foe."[37] This contributed to the political or national narrative that suggestively supported the escalation of effort and lethality which ultimately made the wars of the early twentieth century total.

Political and national narratives play a key role in generating unlimited contributions and tolerances for wars. On 11 January 1943, President Roosevelt made a plea to congress to increase the budget for the war effort. As part of his speech he stated that, "we wage total war because our very existence is threatened. […] Total war is grim reality. It means the dedication of our lives and resources to a single objective:

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[35] van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*…, 44.

[36] *Ibid.,* 44.

[37] John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 3-4.

Victory."[38] Prime Minister Churchill was notorious for his ability to stir, not just English sentiment, but also Allied resolve through his rhetoric. A notable example came in 1940, when he emboldened the Western nations by stating "we shall go onto the end […] whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."[39] Through these two examples it is easy to comprehend how a political narrative can inspire a nation and become part of its "raison d'etre" for growing the war effort and persevering. Moreover, if the enemy's rhetoric also suggests that the nation's values or sovereignty is threatened, then these types of speeches can contribute to the hyperbolic growth and tolerances for the conflict.

Nations or states have commonly engaged in total war when their sovereignty is threatened or perceived to be at risk. In the case of the US, their involvement in World War I and World War II can be considered total in nature. While a multitude of variables contributed to the US being drawn into each war, a distinct threat to Americans and their values existed before war was declared. In World War I, the tangible threat and application of unrestricted submarine warfare is understood to be one of the key issues that drew the US into the war against Germany.[40] Similarly, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was a clear assault on US sovereignty and thus a distinct catalyst in triggering a total war response from the US. In each case, the attacks on US sovereignty were

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[38] Hobbs, *The Myth of* Victory…, 60-61.

[39] Churchill's speech to the House of Commons, 04 June 1940.

[40] Jeremy Black, *The Age of Total War, 1860-1945* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 70.

hyperbolically compounded by the tangible and even intangible threats to US citizens, their society and their values. As Hobbs writes,

> Many people think that Total War is so-called because it involves all the resources of the nation. This puts the cart before the horse. It is the unlimited issues at stake that make a war total in character.[41]

This unlimited quality of total war is the reason why warfare post-1945 became distinctly limited. The threat of nuclear holocaust was incentive to revisit conflict and investigate alternate methods for applying military might to achieve political objectives. However, new paradigms have grown out of the interplay between the concepts of modern limited and total war.

AN INTERESTING DYNAMIC

While it is possible to delineate the degree to which a nation is engaged in either a limited or total war, the nation's commitment is not always congruent with that of its enemy. Thus, if one country is engaged in a limited war, it does not automatically suggest that the antagonistic force will also be fighting a limited war. On the contrary, most postmodern conflicts suggest that wars will have one side fighting a limited war in defence of values or in the interest of achieving limited objectives while often, the defending forces will be fighting a total war for the survival of its party, nation or even state. In the case of Somalia, the warlords would have been fighting with all the resources at their disposal and little care for their own safety to achieve their total war objectives. Similarly, the US and NATO involvement in Kosovo constitutes a limited war-like engagement while the Republic of Serbia would have seen the war as being

[41] Hobbs, *The Myth of* Victory…, 59.

rather total in nature. This concept appears to be most prominent when the military forces of strong nations can challenge the sovereignty of weaker regimes without their own stronger nations being threatened in return. Hence, while US involvement in post-1945 conflict has been predominantly limited in nature, the countries within which the limited wars have been fought may have felt as though the wars were most unlimited.[42] This has had an impact on how antagonistic actors have arrayed themselves to face and fight the US, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan.

THE CONCEPT OF WINNING

Defining victory in a limited war is both challenging and complex. As previously discussed, many modern conflicts have antagonists on either side of the war spectrum. Oftentimes, the intervening force will be fighting a limited war will have a technologically superior conventional military force, fighting beyond its own borders with a view to projecting or protecting its values. Conversely, the defending force will be technologically inferior, potentially non-state and fighting within its own declared borders and culture. And, while the larger conventional force possess a quantifiable military advantage in terms of numbers of armoured vehicles, ground attack fighters and days of supply, all of these tangible strengths can be targeted and degraded by the enemy.

Additionally, any inferior force attack that results in the erosion of conventional military capabilities, be they soldiers or capital equipment, will generate a perception of technical or tactical failure back home. And, any small unit success against such overwhelming conventional power will magnify the success of the inferior force.

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[42] *Ibid*., 284.

Meanwhile, the stronger force will need to generate a mission-success-criteria with much less tangible targets likely; such ethereal or conceptual centers-of-gravity as the "hearts and minds of the people" or "capacity-building." Finally, the total war fighter or oft described "insurgent" will be more likely to fight without adhering to the rules of modern warfare. Much like the proponents of unrestricted submarine warfare or strategic bombing, the total war fighters will target the will of the limited war fighting nations and the will is generally linked to time, lives or fiscal commitment; alone or inclusively.

Perhaps most importantly, the total war fighter's belief that he is fighting for his sovereignty, and thus, is immersed in a total war creates an emotionally advantageous perspective for his cause. Nations engaged in total war and their leaders are willing to sacrifice their time and their lives to achieve their objectives whereas conventional forces, whose reasons for fighting are often less defined, are only willing to take limited risks for their limited objectives. Ironically, the total and limited war dichotomy can actually generate two winners in a war. The 1991 Gulf War is an excellent example of this phenomenon where the limited war fighting force achieved its objectives and left declaring victory. Meanwhile, the domestic Iraqi force, which ultimately ended-up fighting for its sovereignty and solvency was left marginally intact providing the people of Iraq with the impression that perhaps they had won.[43] Clearly, the expectations of total and limited wars and warfare can be differentiated in terms of their character and scope, but can the manner by which victory is achieved or defined also be different? This question will be the focus of chapter two.

[43] Singh, *Dynamics of Limited War*…, 2000.

CHAPTER TWO: DEFINING POSTWAR VICTORY

Chapter two will introduce and investigate Professor Robert Mandel's *Premodern Versus Modern Victory* model with a view to recognizing whether the US' war in Afghanistan is either total or limited warfare. The model will be studied to help develop an understanding of how limited and total war winning criteria can be delineated. Additionally, Mandel's criteria will be applied against the US' war efforts in Afghanistan to develop an understanding of how the US' involvement has both total and limited war-like qualities. The chapter will conclude by arguing that the US war in Afghanistan does not comfortably conform to the total or limited war criteria but rather is more "intermediate" in nature, thus setting the conditions for chapter three's investigation of the why intermediate wars are hard to win.

Robert Mandel, a Professor of the International Affairs Department at Lewis and Clark College has developed a model to help discern the differences between premodern total war success and modern limited war success. The model appears in his paper *Defining Postwar Victory* and serves as an excellent framework for studying the nature of warfare and how wars can be won. By investigating how the US has attempted to terminate the war in Afghanistan, it should be possible to determine whether the US has been fighting in a limited or total war context. To help discern the difference between a total and limited war victory, Mandel has developed criteria that can be applied to define whether a limited or total war success has been pursued or achieved. Through his model, Mandel investigates a series of dimensions within which victory or the perception of

victory needs to be attained. The dimensions are: informational, military, political, economic, social and diplomatic.[44]

SUCCESS ON THE INFORMATIONAL PLANE

Mandel's first criterion deals with defining success on the informational plane. From the premodern total war perspective, he recognizes victory in the informational dimension as "having the victor coercively dictate terms to the vanquished through a formal surrender agreement."[45] Yet, to have a formal surrender, Mandel suggests that there is an expectation that a formal declaration of war must be made. And, while it could be argued that Al Qaeda had made a declaration of war or *jihad* on the US and the US had made a declaration of war against terror, these somewhat generic declarations do not match Mandel's more formalized inter-state pronouncement of war. Mandel recognizes that in the modern limited war context, including the "war on terror," surrender is decidedly unlikely and as such alternate measures of success should be defined that account for the containment or marginalization of the threat.[46] The US' involvement in Afghanistan blurs Mandel's information dimension by the manner in which the war was initiated.

President Bush's rhetoric surrounding the US' decision to fight in Afghanistan straddles the total and limited war criteria for victory. From the total war perspective,

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[44] Robert Mandel, "Defining Postwar Victory," in *Understanding Victory and Defeat in Contemporary War*, ed. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, 142-167 (London: Routledge, 2007), 40.

[45] *Ibid*., 34.

[46] *Ibid*., 35.

Bush's demands that the Taliban, "deliver to [the] United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land […] these demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. They [the Taliban] will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate."[47] Moreover, he compares the impact of the Taliban and Al Qaeda's positions to that of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism, which are recognizable as the most overt threats to the West in the 20th Century. Bush then indicates that the war will not have limited war like criteria for success stating,

> … this war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two yeas ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat.[48]

It is clear that what Bush is saying is that the war will not be limited in context and that it will transcend limited war objectives. Associate Professor of International Security Studies William C. Martel writes that Bush's position reflects "a 'total war on terrorism.'"[49] Bush goes on to say that "American should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen."[50]

Granted, while some of the speech does target the Taliban and Afghanistan, many of the more encompassing statements are meant to be in relation to the more universally understood "War on Terror." However, Afghanistan was the US' first credible target for the US and as such much it was examined as "ground zero" for Bush's rhetoric. Unfortunately, the President seems to have gotten exactly what he said he was going to

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[47] Bush's speech to the Joint Session of Congress following 9/11 attacks, 20 September 2001.

[48] *Ibid.,* 2001.

[49] William C. Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Military Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 231.

[50] Bush's speech to the Joint Session of Congress following 9/11 attacks, 20 September 2001.

get, but perhaps not necessarily what was hoped for. On October 7, 2001 President Bush made a speech to the US from the White House Treaty Room announcing the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. In so doing, Bush's declaration brought to the fore Mandel's second dimension: the military criteria.

SUCCESS FROM THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

Mandel delineates the differences between total and limited war victory in a military context as a dichotomy between "victory as destroying and subjugating the enemy versus neutralizing and deterring the enemy."[51] At the total war end of the spectrum, Mandel sees military victory in a purely Clausewitzian context, where the enemy's capacity to wage war is targeted and destroyed.[52] Additionally, Mandel recognizes that a premodern victory is conditional upon the winning military's ability to remove any possible enemy threat by "annihilating, exiling, incarcerating, or dominating [the enemy] through a lengthy postwar foreign military occupation that thwarts any uprising."[53] There is little question that the US and its allies have attempted to achieve Mandel's criteria for a total war military success over the course of the last eight years, albeit not through an official occupation. Yet, the US, in the early stages of the war, allowed itself to be satisfied by limited war objectives.

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[51] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 35.

[52] von Clausewitz, *On War*…, 388-390.

[53] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 35.

Martel writes that US policy was to "disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime."[54] These objectives in and of themselves are limited. To completely defeat the Taliban, the US and its allies would need to attack the Taliban ideology and break the will of those loyal to the Taliban. Understandably, the Bush administration was concerned about allowing the war to be viewed as an ideological struggle, lest it look more like a Christian crusade and further polarize those of the Islamic faith against the US. Consequently, the US-led coalition focussed on attacking Taliban and Al Qaeda groupings, infrastructure and facilities; a target set that quickly dried-up in the face of Western cruise missile attacks and Special Forces directed coalition air power.[55] Consequently, at least in the early stages of the war, the coalition was successful in achieving only limited war aims. The US had proven that it possessed the resolve to strike back against those who had helped to train and support the perpetrators of 9/11 and they were effective in ousting Afghanistan's ruling Taliban party, but the true outcome of the US's initial actions remained ambiguous.[56]

Many Al Qaeda and Taliban dispersed in the face of the coalition and escaped Afghanistan before coalition ground troops could target, kill or detain them. Consequently, the enemy's will to fight or resist the Western supported government of Hamid Karzai was never extinguished; rather, it was marginalized and ignored in the face of impending US action in Iraq. Additionally, in its haste to achieve domestic support for

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[54] Martel, *Victory in War…*, 230.

[55] *Ibid.*, 231.

[56] Douglas Kellner, "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the 'War on Terror,'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37, no.4 (December 2007): 631; http://proquest.umi.com; Internet; accessed 03 January 2010.

action in Iraq, the US' Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld officially declared the end of major combat operations for Afghanistan on May 1, 2003.[57] It would appear as though the Taliban were not in agreement with Secretary Rumsfeld and the demands of US foreign and domestic policy makers. Seven years of escalating armed conflict in and around Afghanistan would suggest that the US has not yet seen the end of major combat operations.

Clearly, conflict termination in Afghanistan does not fit neatly into Mandel's model for limited or total war victory. The coalition was unsuccessful at completely eradicating the Taliban threat from Afghanistan and though President Bush gave the Taliban a total war-like ultimatum, a total war victory could never be achieved, the reasons for which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. What is important at this stage is the recognition that while Secretary Rumsfeld called an end to major combat operations, at that particular moment, the war was far from over. This complicated and slowed the military's ability to draw on manpower or resources to fully recognized Rumsfeld's claim. Part of the US success was dependent upon the newly instituted Afghan government which had its own difficulties representing itself as a viable and reliable body of governance. This brings the focus of Mandel's model to his third dimension, the political environment.

SUCCESS AND THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

The political dimension is the third variable in Mandel's model. Mandel sees total war victors imposing themselves upon the population of the defeated nation through

[57] Katzman,, *Afghanistan: Post War*…, 8.

a foreign dominated government. Conversely, limited war objectives are meant to set the conditions for an indigenous self-determined governance to develop.[58] The US' involvement in Afghanistan again does not completely reflect either side of the political dimension. Soon after the US began attacking Taliban forces in Afghanistan, it became quite evident that the country would require enormous international support to relieve it of its failed state status. Afghanistan had gone without an official military or police force since 1992, and as such, it lacked the institutions needed to generate peace and support a new government structure without international support.[59]

The Bush Administration recognized that to achieve stability in the region, the US would need to assist in reorganizing the country's political and economic systems.[60] Consequently, the US and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) worked towards facilitating the development of a centralized government. Since the start of Afghanistan's Civil War in 1992, control of Afghanistan was split predominantly along regional lines, a reality that even the Taliban could not fracture.[61] However, UNAMA saw Afghan regionalism as one of the true causes of strife within the country and encouraged a centralized system of governance. The UN believed that the establishment of a centralized Grand Council or *Loya Jirga* would, "broaden the base of the government, assert civilian leadership, promote the democratic process, and take

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[58] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 36-37.

[59] Thomas Barfield, "The Roots of Failure in Afghanistan," *Current History*, (December 2008): 412; http://proquest.umi.com; Internet; accessed 10 January 2010.

[60] Martel, *Victory in War*…, 237.

[61] Barfield, *The Roots of Failure*…, 412.

authority away from the regional leaders."[62] However, interest in the development of a centralized government was, for the most part, generated and contained in Kabul where the Afghan elite could benefit from international assistance and aid.[63] Moreover, it proved to be more advantageous to the international community because it helped to focus domestic support for Afghanistan on the charismatic Hamid Karzai rather than a number of questionable or perceptibly nefarious warlords.

Thus, while the US and the international community did not, in Mandel's words, impose itself on the population; they also did not permit an indigenous self determined governance to develop. Consequently, Afghanistan got the government that the US-led international community believed it needed, and not necessarily what 25 years of region-based tribal leadership would suggest was required. Furthermore, by centralizing the government, a demanding and frustrated Afghan population and their undermined regional leaders were able to focus their angst and frustration on the Afghan leadership in Kabul often colloquially referred to as "Kabulstan."[64] And, though Karzai worked towards maintaining international support, he was seen by the Afghans as being "a vacillating leader unwilling to confront and overcome enemies."[65] A lack of trust in the Afghan governance had a drastic impact on the innumerable tribal communities throughout Afghanistan which coupled with a defunct economy led to unrest and Taliban resurgence.

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[62] Ali A. Jalali, "Afghanistan in 2002: The Struggle to Win the Peace," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 1 (Jan. – Feb., 2003): 117; http://www.jstor.org/stable/3557879; Internet; accessed 03 February 2010.

[63] Barfield, *The Roots of Failure*…, 412.

[64] Anthony H. Cordesman, *The War After the War: Strategic Lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 66.

[65] Barfield, *The Roots of Failure*…, 412.

VICTORY AND THE POST WAR ECONOMY

Mandel's fourth dimension deals with how a victor manages the economic resources of the conquered nation. He sees the winning nation dealing with the defeated state's resources or economic capacity in one of two ways. In a total war sense, the victor can absorb the losing nation's wealth and resources, or in a limited war fashion, the winner can focus on the reconstruction of the defeated state so as to leave a stable economic structure that helps the vanquished nation to reconstitute itself.[66] In the case of Afghanistan, the US has acknowledged that regenerating the Afghan pre-war economy would still put it at the bottom of most Asiatic economies.[67]

The US has recognized that a working economy will be critical to eroding Taliban legitimacy throughout Afghanistan. Consequently, as early as April 2002, President Bush identified a need to generate a "comprehensive reconstruction plan comparable to the 'Marshall Plan' devised for the reconstruction of the post-war Europe."[68] Ironically however, a paradox exists whereby in order for there to be enduring security, Afghanistan needs a workable economy, and in order for there to be a workable economy, Afghanistan needs reliable security.[69] Additionally, the US and coalition forces have identified that re-instituting Afghanistan's pre-war economy will not be enough to satiate the demands of the Afghan people. Capacity building is critical to establishing a stable and enduring Afghan state. For, while the international community is currently donating

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[66] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 27.

[67] Barfield, *The Roots of Failure*…, 413.

[68] Jalali, *Afghanistan in 2002*…, 180.

[69] *Ibid.,* 180.

billions of dollars in aid, it will be the Afghan government's ability to account for, employ and tax its people that will have the enduring effect of stability and social security.

From an economic perspective, the US has gone well beyond what would be expected from a limited war perspective. However, even the aid provided and the capacity building is not without its own set-backs. As of March 2008, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief estimated that of the $15 billion in reconstruction monies donated to Afghanistan since 2001, "40 per cent has returned to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries."[70] Moreover, due to a lack of trust in official Afghan departments, much of the aid money has been applied to projects in Afghanistan without the being coordinated by either central or regional leaders. Thus, again, Afghans are getting the development that the international community believes it needs, not necessarily the development it wants.

WINNING AND THE POST-WAR SOCIETY

Mandel's fifth criterion focuses on the post-conflict social dimension. From the social perspective, Mandel sees total war with respect to limited war victories as concentrating on "… enforcing hierarchical social order versus promoting progressive social transformation."[71] With respect to the social tenet, American attention in Afghanistan is focussed squarely on Afghan social transformation.[72] Afghanistan has

[70] Barfield, *The Roots of Failure*…, 413.

[71] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 38.

been plagued with internal and externally based conflict for much of the last thirty years which has understandably had a dramatic impact on how its society and its social systems. Notably, the US-led international community has identified political transition, security, education, human rights, advancement of women and managing the impact of a narcotic based economy as being integral to Afghanistan's social reformation.[73]

While the US and UNAMA continue to press a progressive social agenda, they are regularly met with resistance and set-backs. As an example, while the Afghan government continues to promote a greater awareness for women's rights, there are still many cases throughout Afghanistan where women are reportedly abused and denied education or employment opportunities.[74] From 2004-2005 three women were appointed to positions within the cabinet. However, following the parliamentary elections in 2005, Karzai nominated only one to the cabinet and she was voted down by the Islamist conservatives.[75] Thus, while efforts are being made to generate an Afghan society that is more recognizable and acceptable to Western sensitivities, Afghanistan is not yet ready to adhere to a liberal agenda.

VICTORY AND POST-WAR DIPLOMACY

Mandel's final criterion looks at the diplomatic dimension. Namely the relationship between "…victory as accomplishing war aims on one's own versus inviting

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[72] *Ibid*., 39.

[73] Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post War*…, 9-25.

[74] *Ibid*., 22.

[75] *Ibid*., 22.

third-party conflict intervention."[76] In this context, Afghanistan again presents an interesting puzzle for resolution. American intervention in Afghanistan was originally based on a US construct under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The OEF mandate saw the US mission in Afghanistan focused predominantly on finding, killing or capturing Osama bin Laden and any other members of Al Qaeda that may have been operating in Afghanistan. Furthermore, OEF also dedicated a line of its operations to deposing the Taliban regime that had helped to house and harbour Al Qaeda. While the United Nations did not sanction or authorize the US-led invasion or OEF, it did recognize the need for subsequent intervention under the auspices of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF received UN Security Council endorsement on 20 December 2001 in response to the Bonn Agreement which was designed facilitate the recreation of the state of Afghanistan.

Under Mandel's model, ISAF could have been seen as an intervening third-party necessary for bringing resolution to the war in Afghanistan. However, because the US is a member of NATO, ISAF became more a transitional force than a third-party intermediary. Moreover, since the Taliban was forced underground by US actions and because there was initially no indication that the US under President Bush wanted to negotiate a peace, there was no visible need for a diplomatic solution to the war in Afghanistan. So, while the US did accomplish many of its initial OEF war aims independent of third-party involvement, the protracted conflict in Afghanistan has demanded, at the very least, a re-packaging of US forces into the more internationally acceptable ISAF. Clearly, the Afghanistan problem has again side-stepped Mandel's

[76] Mandel, *Defining Postwar Victory*…, 39.

criteria and fits neither the total or limited war variables for diplomatic resolution. So what can be made of this realization?

LESSONS FOR DEFINING VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN

By comparing what Mandel's sees as being necessary for victory in either limited or total wars to how the US has pursued the war in Afghanistan it is obvious that there are some distinct challenges for the model. In the case of the informational, political, military and diplomatic dimensions, the US has straddled the line between total and limited war victories or paths to success. Meanwhile, in the case of the economic dimension, the US has not only pursued a limited war objective of rebuilding, but has gone well beyond the exigencies of the system and supported capacity building that did not even exist before the war began. Only the social dimension fits neatly into Mandel's framework. The US has gone to great lengths to promote progressive social transformation not only because of the belief that it will generate and sustain a lasting positive impact on the country, but also for the pragmatic purpose of selling the war to its tax payers back home.

The war in Afghanistan is understandably a challenging one because it plays to the insurgent's strengths and the US' weaknesses. Afghanistan should have been identified and pursued as a limited war with limited objectives that, once achieved, should have signalled the repatriation of all US forces. And, though callous, the perception would have been that the US had taken action in the wake of 9/11 and that terrorists and the countries that harbour them would not be safe if they attacked the

United States. Sadly, however, US objectives became confused by Presidential rhetoric in the days following 9/11. The US needed an outlet for its grief and the Taliban-Al Qaeda nexus provided the requisite target. However, once ousted from Afghanistan, American sensitivity to the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and reformation provided a fissure large enough to usher in a second round of hostilities. This was compounded by the US' focus on the war in Iraq and the unfortunate belief that Secretary Rumsfeld's declaration that major combat operations had ceased would also be a signal to the insurgency to stop fighting. Clearly it was not.

As discussed above, what should have been a US limited war is viewed by the insurgency as a total war for which the insurgents will sacrifice their very being to win. The same does not hold true for the US and the impact is staggering. Gil Mermon, a Research Fellow at the University of Sydney and an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Tel-Aviv University argues that democracies cannot win small wars because they cannot "escalate the level of violence and brutality to that which can secure victory."[77] Mermon's statement clearly recognizes the paradox between rallying the will of a nation to fight in relation to having the requisite resolve to win even if there is no sustained or visible threat to one's own society or its sovereignty. Mermon goes on to say that democracies are "restricted by their domestic structure, and in particular by the creed of some of their most articulate citizens and the opportunities their institutional makeup presents such citizens."[78] Thus, while in the wake of 9/11 the US recognized the need to strike against its enemies, it does not appear to posses the resolve to do so in a

[77] Gil Mermon, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15.

[78] *Ibid.,* 15.

manner that would be seen as entirely conclusive. The result is an application of force that reflects a mere "testing of the waters" to see what it can get away with and what the domestic tolerances are willing to accept.

In the case of Afghanistan, US involvement, while initially limited, is currently beginning to resemble an Aaron-like hyperbolic increase in soldiers, equipment and violence. Meanwhile, under the Obama administration, the US has also begun to investigate the possibility of a Somalia-like mission end date and withdrawal. The manner in which the US is prosecuting the war in Afghanistan is neither limited nor total in is quality or characteristics; rather, it is a fusion of both total and limited conflict that could be recognized as being much more "intermediate" than anything else. In this "intermediate" context, US involvement in Afghanistan will now be further analyzed and dissected in the interest of realigning a suitable manner by which modern and future like-wars can be perceived prepared for and fought.

CHAPTER 3: WHY INTERMEDIATE WAR IS HARD TO WIN

In the previous chapter, the US' war in Afghanistan was described as being neither limited nor total in nature, but rather an intermediate blend of the two. The US' inability to settle on the type of conflict that it is currently fighting speaks to the distinct challenges that countries must face when attempting to defeat an insurgent threat thousands of miles from home. The challenges are further compounded when the perceived benefits and criteria for winning are ill-defined and intermittently renegotiated.

Gil Mermon, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Tel Aviv University and Jonathan D. Caverley, an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, have both published independent studies that may answer why it is that the US is having such a difficult time defining and fighting the war in Afghanistan. Both professors suggest that democracies are inherently incapable of defeating insurgencies due in part to the relationship that exists between the people, the government and the military.[79] Conversely, Jason Lyall, a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Yale's Department of Political Science, and Ivan Arreguin-Toft, a Postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, argue that the US' difficulties in Afghanistan are due to poor strategic decision making and the harsh reality that counter-insurgencies are hard to fight regardless of domestic polity.[80]

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[79] See, Gil Mermon, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Jonathan D. Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia," *International Security* 34, no.3 (Winter 2009/10): 119-157; http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/19884/myth_of_military_myopia.html ?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F958%2Fjonathan_d_caverley; accessed 28 February 2010.

[80] See, Jason Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy's Impact on War Outcomes and Duration," *International Organization* 64, (Winter 2010); 167-192; http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=

The intent of this chapter is to investigate why it is that the US has had such a difficult time not only defining the type of war that it is fighting, but also why it is that its objectives and strategic goals are consistently shifting. The first section of this chapter will pursue the Mermon and Caverley arguments that democracies are politically ill-equipped to fight and win small wars. Second, the chapter will investigate Lyall and Arreguin-Toft's assertions that the US is not approaching the war in Afghanistan in a manner that is strategically suitable to the environment. Finally, the last section of this chapter will compare both arguments with a view to identifying how the US military has been both pushed and pulled between limited and total war-like engagements to satisfy strategic objectives and domestic sentiment. This chapter concludes that the American polity and Washington's choice of strategy are both root causes of the US' intermediate war in Afghanistan and these need to be reconsidered if the US is to win future insurgent based wars.

THE DIFFICULTY WITH DEMOCRACY

Gil Mermon and Jonathan Caverley have both written extensively about the constraints and restraints that democracies face when fighting small wars. In particular, their studies have tended to focus on the pre-Afghanistan period and most notably on the US' war in Vietnam. Yet, much of what they have said warrants investigation for this study. Mermon's seminal book entitled *How Democracies Lose Small Wars* poses two

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093164&jid=&volumeId=&issueId=&aid=7093156 Internet; accessed 28 February 2010, and Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 93-128; http://www.jstor.org; Internet; accessed 28 February 2010.

excellent questions that must be answered by US policy-makers and senior soldiers if victory in Afghanistan is to be achieved: (1) "How do insurgents win small wars against democracies in spite of their military inferiority?" and (2) "How do democracies lose such wars in spite of their military superiority?"[81] While these two questions can easily generate a wide range of discussion, they are relevant to this study because they help to identify a series of relationships between governments, their people and their militaries. Furthermore, Mermon's questions also place emphasis on the role of the insurgent in this relationship.

The US' initial intentions for its attack on Afghanistan were based on a social and political need to respond to the tragedy of 9/11. Moreover, the goal of deposing the Taliban regime provided an easily definable objective. However, the resurgence of the Taliban after 2003 and the US' renewed focus on Afghanistan following its war in Iraq generated a renewed interest in how the US fights insurgencies. In the case of Afghanistan, Mermon and Lyall suggest that the manner by which the US is currently fighting has in some ways hindered success.

Mermon writes, "… to fight, let alone win wars, states need their soldiers to be ready to harm others and be killed or maimed [in the process]."[82] This expectation does not fit neatly into the manner by which the US has grown accustomed to fighting contemporary conflicts. As discussed in chapter one, US involvement in theatres such as Kosovo and Somalia reflect a predominantly technology-dependent and casualty-averse populace, particularly when there is little threat to national solvency or sovereignty.

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[81] Mermon, *How Democracies Lose*…, 14.

[82] *Ibid.,* 19.

Thus, President George Bush's post-9/11 speech stipulated that "The United States will do what it takes to win this war."[83] Yet, within four months of the start of the war in Afghanistan, the US Congress openly remarked to General Franks, Commander CENTCOM, that it was relieved and satisfied that the military had been able to achieve so very much with so few casualties.[84]

Similarly, the US has conditioned itself to fighting in a manner that is most sensitive to collateral damage. Again, Mermon writes that "…democracies fail in small wars because they find it extremely difficult to escalate the level of violence and brutality to that which can secure victory."[85] Mermon's perspective does appear to be callous, but, it is relevant when examined in relation to public and governmental tolerances for collateral damage. One of the ways in which the US has marketed the war in Afghanistan to its anti-war demographic is to showcase the precision with which force has been applied to defeat the insurgency.

General Franks reported to the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in February 2002 that "…precision guided munitions are more than a force multiplier. They have reduced the numbers of air sorties […] and have resulted in unprecedented low levels of collateral damage."[86] More telling however, is how he quantifies the results.

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[83] Robert G. Hillman, "A Shared Sacrifice: As nation buries dead, president warns of long campaign," http://multimedia.belointeractive.com/attack/response/0916bush.html; Internet; accessed 20 February 2010.

[84] Colin McInnes, "A Different Kind of War?" in *Rethinking the Nature of War*, ed. Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Jan Angstrom, 109-134 (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 122.

[85] Mermon, How *Democracies Lose…*, 15.

[86] Senate Armed Services Committee, "107 Congress Hearings: Second session: Statement of General Tommy R. Franks Commander in Chief, US Central Command," http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2002/Franks.pdf; Internet; accessed 28 February 2010.

Franks goes on to say that "... From this perspective, precision guided munitions have had a *strategic* effect."[87] Through his statement, Franks recognizes the limited tolerances for collateral damage and the impact that any unnecessary damage may have on support for the war. Franks' sentiment was later echoed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in his assertion that "… no nation in human history has done more to avoid civilian casualties than the United States has in this conflict."[88] Through their speeches, Commander CENTCOM and the Secretary of Defense have not only validated public concerns for collateral damage, but they have also generated an expectation that collateral damage should not occur, and if it does, it may have a strategic impact.

So, if Franks and Rumsfeld were applauded for their efforts to reduce casualties and collateral damage in the early stages of the war, and this was the mark of strategic success, then what is to be made of the more recent developments in Afghanistan? Do ever growing American and Afghan civilian casualties and collateral damage infer strategic failure? In terms of winning and losing wars, the answer must be – no. Yet, it is clear that the US is sensitive to both and this has an impact on how the American people see the war and consequently, it has an impact on how the US military plans and conducts operations. In fact, as early as the war in Kosovo, American Air Force commanders were already beginning to show signs of frustration concerning the ever growing control over targeting and the concern for civilian casualties.[89] Cavalrey's paper explains why.

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[87] *Ibid*., 2010. Emphasis added.

[88] Schrader, Esther. "Pentagon Defends Strikes as Civilian Toll Rises." http://articles.latimes.com/2001/oct/30/news/mn-63335; Internet; accessed 28 February 2010.

[89] McInnes, *A Different Kind of War…*, 120.

In his paper *The Myth of Military Myopia*, Caverley explains how modern democracies are willing to "…substitute treasure for blood,"[90] and how this willingness has a dramatic impact on the manner by which democratic militaries fight. He further defines a trinity of understanding that must exist between the democratic public, the government and the military. Essentially, Caverley argues that if a nation is to go to war, the public must first accept the need and recognize that it will be a costly venture. Second, the government must propose the war on behalf of its citizens, and finally, the government must ensure that the military fights a "capital-intensive" campaign.[91]

Caverley's explanation for how political will for war is generated provides insight into why the US has a difficult time fighting in a COIN environment. From a democratic perspective, it is clear that the public must support the war in order for the government to propose and pursue the conflict. However, what is also evident, but not entirely rational, is the expectation that the public can forcibly manipulate the manner by which the war is conducted. This public expectation is not victory-centric, but rather focuses more on conditional participation. Therefore, while it is evident that the US is willing to sacrifice "treasure for blood," it does appear to be most unwilling to give-up both. As Robert Komer, a key COIN adviser on President Johnson's staff during the Vietnam War has asserted, "…What [war] costs you in blood is much more politically visible than what it costs you in treasures."[92] Thus, it is plausible to suggest that while the US is willing spend money to achieve military success abroad, it is far less willing to forfeit the lives of

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[90] Caverley, *The Myth of Military Myopia*…, 121.

[91] *Ibid*., 131.

[92] *Ibid*., 140.

its soldiers to achieve the same ends. This seemingly subtle reality does have a large impact on the way strategic, operational and tactical level commanders develop their plans and apply force.

While Mermon and Caverley cite reasons why democracy makes fighting contemporary COIN wars so very difficult, there are those who argue that democracies are actually better equipped to fight modern wars. Professors of Political Science and authors Dan Reiter and Allan Stam believe that latter. In their book *Democracies at War* Reiter and Stam suggest that democracies win most wars they initiate because they are more effective at choosing to fight in wars they can win.[93] They go on to assert that a democracy fosters a marketplace of ideas that provides its leaderships with a wider array of intelligence gathering capabilities and sources than non-democratic governments. Moreover, they suggest that democratic militaries are more likely to be successful in war because they are more skilled and dedicated.

While provocative, Reiter and Stam's arguments are predominantly statistics-based with carefully defined criteria for what constitutes victories, draws and defeats. For example, Reiter and Stam rate the US' war in Vietnam as a draw.[94] Meanwhile, visions of US Marines evacuating the US embassy in Saigon by helicopter and the subsequent take-over of South Vietnam by the North would suggest that it was a most distinct loss.

Assistant Professor of Political Science at Duke University, Alexander B. Downes, effectively dismantles Reiter and Stam's data in his paper *How Smart and*

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[93] Dan Reiter and A.C. Stam, *Democracies at War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 28-33.

[94] *Ibid*., 56.

Tough are Democracies? In so doing, Downes also provides some insight into a dynamic that exists between the US government and its constituents. Downes' paper explains how a Presidency's need to accommodate public expectation, or provide the perception of political congruence with its constituents' desires, can adversely affect decision making. Downes suggests that democratically elected Presidents may make poor choices regarding the wars they choose to fight, and the manner by which the wars will be fought in order to sustain or support their domestic agendas. [95]

Notably, Downes uses the Vietnam era Johnson Administration to make the first point. He suggests that "…Johnson believed he would face a backlash if he withdrew from Vietnam that would imperil the Great Society programs and ruin his presidency."[96] Furthermore, Downes claims that Johnson directed that the US military immerse itself in Vietnam because to not do so would have "…triggered a blocking coalition in the Senate capable of killing his legislative program."[97] Thus, while Johnson's military advisors lobbied hard against entanglement in Vietnam, and Johnson understood the risks and unfavourable odds for success, he chose to fight mostly to protect his domestic agenda. The democratic process has had a similar impact on the relationship between the President and the people of the US during more modern presidencies.

The current Obama administration provides an example of a presidency that has been forced to manage and become further entangled in a war that was initiated by a

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[95] Alexander B. Downes, "How Smart and Tough are Democracies?" *International Security* 33, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 9-51; http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18984/how_smart_and_tough_are_democracies_reassessing_theories_of_democratic_victory_in_war.html?breadcrumb=%2Fexperts%2F1108%2Falexander_b_downes; Internet; accessed 28 February 2010.

[96] *Ibid*., 48.

[97] *Ibid*., 48.

different political party. To maintain foreign policy stability, the Obama team has met the demands to not only continue operating in Afghanistan, but they have also developed a new strategy for the war. Downes writes, "…Democratic processes can drive national leaders to start or enter wars they are not confident in winning, or get caught in quagmires by failing to confront the possible long-term consequences of a short-term victory."[98] This obligatory relationship is in part responsible for why the US government, its people and its military have inadvertently remoulded the concepts of total and limited war into it current intermediate state.

THE IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIC RELATIONSHIP

While much thought has gone into the relationship that exists between democracies and the expected outcome of modern wars, there is a school of thought that believes that democracy has little to do with forecasting victory. Professor Ivan Arreguin-Toft believes that the best way to predict the outcome of asymmetric wars is by investigating the strategic interactions of both forces in relation to one another.[99] While simple in its construct, Arreguin-Toft's model helps to explain why the US has experienced such difficulty in winning the war in Afghanistan. Arreguin-Toft's paper *How the Weak Win Wars* examines the relationship between strong / weak actors and direct / indirect approaches to warfare. Arreguin-Toft's paper argues and proves statistically that if strong and weak actors' strategic approaches are matched, be they

[98] *Ibid*., 50.

[99] Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*…, 95.

conventional or unconventional, or in his words direct or indirect, then it is most likely that the strong actor will be victorious in the conflict. However, if the approaches are unmatched, it is more likely that the weak actor will win the war.[100]

Arreguin-Toft's data supports his hypothesis by indicating that strong-actors were victorious in 76 percent of the conflicts in which their strategic approach matched the enemy's. Meanwhile, weak-actors were able to win 63 percent of all the conflicts where opposite-approaches were taken by the weak and strong forces.[101] Arreguin-Toft's study is particularly relevant to this paper because it helps to prove that the US' capacity to wage war does not in and of itself articulate how the war should be fought. Thus, even if the US were completely committed to winning the war in Afghanistan and dedicated itself to victory using total war-like tolerances, Arreguin-Toft's study suggests that there would still be no guarantee of a US victory. Rather, he suggests that it is the Taliban's strategic response, or method of fighting, that would be a far better determinant of who would be victorious.

Arreguin-Toft astutely recognizes a common expectation among most laymen concerning the application of force. He writes that there is a belief that "… If power implies victory, then an overwhelming power advantage implies an overwhelming – and rapid – victory."[102] Clearly, in contemporary conflict this is not necessarily the case. Yet, the manner by which the most recent US administration has decided to apply force suggests that the relationship is not quite understood. President Obama has committed to sending an additional 30 000 soldiers to Afghanistan to help bring the war to a close,

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[100] *Ibid*., 108.

[101] *Ibid*., 111.

[102] *Ibid*., 105.

however, this was only done with the understanding that US forces would begin their draw-down starting in 2011. Thus, the expectation is that the mass of forces will be able to generate the requisite quick-results. Arreguin-Toft's model implies that the greatest probability for success will not be dependent on the variable of "how many," but rather "how the many are employed." This is not only sobering but also vital to understanding relationships in modern war. Professor Jason Lyall's paper *Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents?* builds on Arreguin-Toft's model and exposes even more grounds for concern in the way the US is prosecuting the war in Afghanistan.

Lyall's paper helps to round out the cycle of relationships that exist between the military, the people and the government. His paper draws different conclusions from the connection between COIN warfare and democracies. It is Lyall's position that democracies have difficulty not because of their polity, but because of some of the other characteristics of democratic nations. In particular, democracies are generally wealthier than non-democracies and as such are far more likely to possess mechanized forces. It is Lyall's contention that the employment of mechanized forces makes winning COIN wars difficult.[103] Additionally, the stability of democratic governments increases the likelihood that its forces are fighting beyond its own borders to help settle disputes that have little impact on domestic sovereignty. Because many COIN wars are fought in postcolonial states, Western intervention often resembles occupation to the indigenous

[103] In the case of the US in Afghanistan, vehicles carry food, water, fuel, ammunition, medical supplies and a wide array of command and control systems which are used to direct and track the force. But, as Lyall has suggested, the vehicles also distance American soldiers from the indigenous peoples they are supposed to be protecting and whose "heart and minds" they are meant to be winning. Additionally, vehicle employment conditions the soldiers to a particular form of warfare. In the case of Western nations, the fused and joint employment of vehicles, air power, indirect fires and strong communications are all characteristics of a "manoeuvrist" method of warfare or what Arreguin-Toft would define as "direct" warfare.

population. This perception is easily exploited by insurgent forces to unify disparate groups against a common foe.

Thus, while Lyall recognizes that democracies have difficulty defeating insurgencies, he argues that democracies struggle not because of their politics, but because of the circumstances often enjoyed by democratic countries.[104] Wealth and political stability at home give democratic populations the luxury of selecting the wars they wish to fight in and the manner by which they will fight. Caverley's contention that democracies are willing to expend treasure to save blood supports Lyall's theory regarding the employment of mechanized forces. Not only are armoured vehicles necessary for getting foreign soldiers around the battlespace, but they are also, in many ways, key to their protection which is in turn important to the people of the democratic nation.

With the exception of Reiter and Stam's arguments concerning the natural strengths of a democratic military, many of the above arguments have identified challenges that are currently facing the US and its war in Afghanistan. Caverley has invoked the "Clausewitzian Trinitarian" relationships that exist between the people, its government and the military by explaining that the will of the people drives policy which in turn has an impact on the way the military fights. Yet, what is missing from Caverley's paper is the inverse of that paradigm. Notably, that the manner by which the military fights also has a dramatic impact on how the war is perceived by the people. This reality is captured by Mermon's articulations regarding domestic intolerances for casualties and collateral damage. Finally, by dissecting Reiter and Stam's book on

[104] Lyall, *Do Democracies Make Inferior Insurgents*…, 189.

Democracies at War, Downes effectively connects and rounds out the paradigm by capturing the reality of democratically elected governments.

Downs recognizes that while the government is meant to be adjudicating over and applying the collective will of its people, it is often victim of its own political circumstance or party-based agendas. This has had a dramatically adverse impact on the US' ability to win in Afghanistan.

Presidential rhetoric designed to build public support for the war in the days following 9/11 was passionate and helped to manifest a total war vision for success. However, in dispatching its soldiers to Afghanistan there was a distinct expectation that the war could be won with limited war-like constraints. The President pontificated that the US' quarrel was not with the people of Afghanistan, but with Al-Qaeda and the supporting Taliban regime. Thus, the enemy was meant to be carved out of Afghanistan like a cancer leaving the rest of the Afghan body intact. General Franks decided to deploy Special Forces units to ally with anti-Taliban Afghans, a choice that was made over the alternative of deploying large regular force units. This helped to keep the number of casualties down and also speaks to the desire to keep the war limited in terms of the commitment of soldiers. Franks' annotated interactions with the SASC over the precise employment of air dropped munitions and the low casualty rates are the final proof of a limited war expectation. Unfortunately, precision bombing and low casualty rates would not be the end of the US war in Afghanistan and they certainly were not enough to bring the enemy to its knees.[105]

[105] Arreguin-Toft posits that Guerrilla Warfare Strategy requires two elements to be successful: "(1) physical sanctuary (e.g., swamps, mountains, thick forest, or jungle) or political sanctuary (e.g., weakly defended border areas or border areas controlled by sympathetic states)," and "(2) a supportive population (to supply fighters with intelligence and logistical support, as well as replacements)." The

Furthermore, it gradually became evident that those anti-Taliban groupings being supported by the US were pursuing their own objectives. American Special Forces units were deceived into using air power to help warlords settle inter-tribal conflicts. Meanwhile, the archaic stability that had been established by the Taliban no longer existed and the country descended even further into chaos. The US recognized that while the Afghan body no longer had any obvious cancers that needed carving out, it was now the Afghan body itself that was the cancer. Enter an ever growing US presence and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help with the development of an otherwise absent bureaucratic and social infrastructure. Thus, the Special Forces scalpel was replaced with a broad sword and as the US engagement grew so did American domestic interest. Simultaneously, the once limited war began to morph into a more intermediate engagement which, with the return of the Taliban, became an intermediate war.

The cyclic progression of Caverley's "treasure for blood," Lyall's "wealthy mechanization" and Arrguin-Toft's "strategic interaction" concepts explain why it is that the military is having such a difficult time winning the COIN war in Afghanistan. The American tax payer wants to ensure that all manner of technology and force be applied to save American lives - but saving lives has very little to do with winning war. This has manifested itself in the form of massive air strikes against insurgent positions and the

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Taliban found both in its country, its people and neighbouring Pakistan. Afghanistan provides the guerrilla fighter with a wide array of physical sanctuary. Grape fields impede mounted mobility and provide both cover and concealment regardless of the season. Furthermore, Afghanistan is extremely mountainous and dotted with wadis and underground irrigation systems; all support the guerrilla. Culturally, the Afghan tribal code demands that Afghans provide assistance and hospitality to those in need making it possible for belligerent forces to move about the country with little risk of starvation or discovery. Finally, Afghanistan's porous border with Pakistan provides the perfect sanctuary. Pakistan's Pashtuns are ethnically identical to Afghanistan's Pashtuns sharing both language and appearance and are thus nationally indecipherable.

ever growing list of field units and armament being deployed to the theatre. Unfortunately, with an ever growing number of US soldiers, the likelihood of casualties also increases. This puts pressure on the military to interdict, disrupt or strike-back against the insurgents which in turn increases the instances of collateral damage, including civilian casualties. Like falling dominos, increased collateral damage and casualties signals the US population to stress the government about how the war is being fought and the cycle starts all over again. Interestingly, however, is that with each renewal of the cycle, the military is further stretched between total and limited war extremes. The total war objective that they are most drawn toward is the absolute of victory. Meanwhile, the military is meant to achieve the complete victory with limited tolerances for collateral damage or civilian casualties. Added to these conditions are the need to reduce American casualties and a military quandary that is virtually impossible to rectify.

Perhaps most disparaging is the fact that the cycle is completed over and over again with little consideration for the strategy being employed by the enemy which, as Arreguin-Toft argues, is critical if the US is to win. On a positive note, US forces are currently arrayed to deal with any eventuality that it may face in the form of either conventional or unconventional threats. Alternatively, however, as troop numbers increase to hold Afghanistan's populated areas, the US' presence will begin to look more like an occupation rather than a stability force. This, coupled with regional angst among national, district and tribal leaders, only serves to make the US and ISAF the only tangible forces against which disgruntled Afghans can unite. The situation looks most desperate indeed. So what is to be done?

Eliot Cohen and John Gooch's book *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* uses counterfactual analysis to determine why militaries fail in war.[106] The Cohen and Gooch analysis is designed to ask the "what if" question with the expectation that by analyzing what is not working the analyst may actually be able to derive a concept that will or might work. Through the use of a counterfactual analysis, the final chapter of this paper will use the first three chapters of analysis with at view to generating a plausible solution for the Afghanistan problem. And, while it is unlikely that the generated solution will have any impact on how the war is currently being fought, its concept should be provocative enough to generate discussion for application in future Afghanistan-like wars.

[106] Eliot Cohen and J. Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 46.

CHAPTER 4: BEING THE BETTER INSURGENCY

While investigating the War in Afghanistan, most academics have qualified a variety of reasons for why the US is having such a difficult time winning, but very few are prepared to stake their reputation on what needs to be done if the US is to win. The purpose of this final chapter is to generate a plausible solution for US involvement in Afghanistan-like conflicts. The proposed solution will use the analysis of the previous three chapters with a view to generating a counterfactual analysis designed to construct a workable concept for Afghanistan-like wars.

First, this chapter will focus on developing a framework that assimilates the logic of the previous chapters with a view to identifying how the military can best be employed to satisfy the demands of the government and the population. This chapter will argue that the US needs to be prepared to fight as an insurgency itself if it is to break the will of its enemy and achieve a recognizable victory in intra-state wars. Next, the chapter will identify some of the more prominent counter-arguments for the proposed model. Notably, the need to accept that winning a war against unconventional forces takes time and fighting as an insurgency may not be conducive to winning quickly. Moreover, the chapter will accept that while some US initiatives have come close to what is being proposed, they are in fact quite dissimilar and as such likely to be ineffective when applied in a COIN environment. The chapter will conclude by explaining that the US must move away from its intermediate warfare ideology and pursue an insurgency-like method of waging war that will win in Afghanistan-like insurgencies. If the previous chapters have made anything clear, it is that the best way to defeat an insurgency is not to

use overwhelming firepower or confuse the Afghans with hand-outs by day and bombs by night, but rather to be a better insurgency than the insurgents themselves.

HOW TO BUILD AN INSURGENCY

By applying a counterfactual analysis to the previous chapters, some distinct characteristics of how the US needs to fight an Afghanistan-like insurgency begin to materialize. First, the US needs to fight in a manner that is strategically similar to its enemy or at the very least have the capacity to force the enemy to fight the US in a fashion that is strategically similar to how the US has chosen to fight. As noted in chapter three, if the warfighting strategy of both antagonist forces is matched, then victory is most likely to be achieved by the stronger of the two forces. Thus, how the US fights will need to have prominence over more conventional priorities such as how many soldiers need to fight and with which resources.

Second, the US needs to reduce its level of mechanization. As explained in the previous chapter, vehicles and technological superiority are critical to winning against a peer military, but seem to have a counter-productive impact in a COIN war because they separate the soldiers from the indigenous populations whose trust they are trying to gain. Additionally, as discussed above, the mechanization of military force conditions the soldiers to a more conventional type of warfare and offsets their strategy from that of their weaker enemy. As Arreguin-Toft explains in chapter three, this reduces the US' ability to win.

Third, troop commitments need to be managed very carefully. Though current US military thought suggests that saturating Afghanistan will help to win more of the country more quickly, there is a prevailing counter-argument that suggests that too many foreign soldiers begins to look like an occupation.[107] Additionally, the more soldiers the US commits to a theatre, the greater the likelihood of casualties, which as noted above erodes the will to fight in democracies. As demonstrated in chapter two with the Somalia example, democratic states are particularly casualty averse and as such to be successful in fighting contemporary insurgencies, the US needs to devise a method of fighting that continues to reduce troop commitment and casualty rates.

The previous point is interwoven with the fourth and final characteristic which is that for COIN wars to be successful, they must reduce collateral damage to both infrastructure and civilian non-combatants because winning the will of the indigenous population is the main objective. As expressed through Mermon's argument in chapter three, the societies and governing bodies of democratic states have low tolerances for collateral damage and indigenous civilian casualties. Any tragedy of this nature is often newsworthy and can have a demoralizing effect on the society that is funding the war effort.

When the aforementioned characteristics and constraints are observed in relation to war fighting methods, they do not so much resemble COIN or a hybrid of conventional or irregular warfare; rather, the necessary methodology and characteristics resemble insurgency itself. To match the enemy's methods and strategy in Afghanistan and reduce their dependence on mechanized forces, the US soldiers would need to fight like

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[107] Lyall, *Do Democracies Make Inferior Insurgents*…, 178.

Guerrillas. Additionally, to reduce the number of American soldiers but maintain the same amount of combat power, the US would need to solicit, encourage and then shape the support of the indigenous population against the enemy regime. More importantly, however, the indigenous force would need to be generated and sustained in a manner that reflected the dress, culture and armament indicative of the indigenous society so as not to look like an occupying force. Finally, to reduce collateral damage, US forces would need to resort to more close-in direct fire engagements or ambushes against known enemy targets rather than the rely on the devastating impact of mechanized manoeuvre and the potentially errant effects of airdropped munitions. Thus, this analysis suggests that the best way to defeat an insurgency in a manner that is palatable to both the US and the country within which an insurgent threat is likely, is to be a better insurgency.

INSURGENCY 101

Steven Metz, a Political Scientist at the Strategic Studies Institute, writes that "Starting an insurgency is easy. A dozen or so dedicated radicals with access to munitions and explosives can do it. Building an effective insurgency, though, is difficult."[108] Metz suggests that to be an effective insurgency the country in which the insurgency will take place must have the requisite preconditions and the insurgents must have an effective strategy, ideology, leadership and resources.[109]

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[108] Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response, (Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 5.

[109] *Ibid*., 6-7.

In the case Afghanistan, the preconditions for an anti-Taliban insurgency existed before the US invasion of 2001. Metz states that there must be frustration among the population and a "conspiratorial history and culture"[110] are necessary if the insurgency is to succeed. Certainly, Afghanistan possessed all the requisite preconditions. Author and Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid writes of the Taliban in 2001, "[the] lack of local representation in urban administration made the Taliban appear as an occupying force."[111] Moreover, "The Taliban did not allow even Muslim reporters to question edicts or to discuss interpretations of the Qur'an."[112] In this context, it possible to recognize how the visibly archaic Taliban rule had fostered an environment of mistrust and social unrest – conditions ripe for insurgency.

Next, to be an effective insurgency, Metz indicates that the strategy being employed by the movement must be able to achieve three components. They are "1) force protection (via dispersion, sanctuary, the use of complex terrain, effective counterintelligence); 2) actions to erode the will, strength and legitimacy of the regime; and 3) augmentation of resources and support."[113] While intra-state insurgencies may flounder when it comes to achieving force protection or the augmentation of resources, if the US were to fight as an insurgency, the standard hardships that insurgent forces face could be managed quite handily. American insurgents would be able to draw on US strategic level resources to not only maintain a positive force protection posture, but also to ensure that their units received the appropriate supplies and manpower. Throughout

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[110] *Ibid*., 6.

[111] Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 101-102.

[112] *Ibid*., 107.

[113] Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*…, 6.

the early stages of the 2001 Afghan War, American Special Forces were able to direct and employ air power in support of their force protection. Additionally, there were air drops of humanitarian aid to show the Afghans that the war was not targeting the civilians, but the Taliban.[114] This is an excellent example of how US strategic level resources could enhance and support and American partnered insurgency and foster the support of the indigenous population. The true challenge for an American insurgency would be to resist the temptation to grow the insurgent force's base of supply to the point where conventional forces would need to be added to the theatre to protect all the resources.

Victory in an insurgency is dependent upon the insurgent's ability to erode the will, strength and legitimacy of the targeted regime. In this respect, any American insurgency would need to be extremely deliberate. Any and all actions carried out by a US-based insurgency would need to conform to American ethical or legal guidelines, otherwise American domestic social or political support for the mission would be compromised. And, while Metz explains that "insurgency is dominated by a feeling that the end justifies the means,"[115] US insurgencies would need to target the enemy's will in a transparent and morally lawful manner. Certainly, the indiscriminate bombing of market-going civilians to invoke fear among the population would not be a suitable American method for undermining the existing regime. Rather, the US insurgency would need to focus its attention on attacking the enemy regime's military or human rights

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[114] Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, (New York: The Penguin Group, 2008), 80.

[115] Metz, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*…, 6.

violating institutions. In the case of Afghanistan for example, the US could have targeted the Taliban militia and the Ministry responsible for the Religious police.

Metz' second major criterion deals with the generation of an ideology which is designed to erode the legitimacy of the target regime. The ideology that the US based insurgency would need to purport would be one that was consistent with an American perspective of democracy and freedom. This said, the US insurgency would need to ensure that the vision it used to sell the idea of insurgency is congruent with the culture, hopes, and belief of the society in which it is operating.[116] Metz suggests that a nationalistic angle would make the ideology "broad and unifying."[117] Critical to this would be the selection of the insurgency's indigenous leadership.

Finding and partnering with effective leadership would no doubt be the most challenging aspect of generating and propagating an insurgency. This could best be achieved by highlighting the failings of the regime in power with a view to creating and supporting all anti-regime forces. Thus, the goal would be to polarize the country against the enemy regime. This said, the US' ability to draw on a wide array of assets from both a humanitarian and protective-firepower perspective would help to fortify the most appropriate anti-regime leaders. Again, having the ability to draw on American resources would also assist the selected insurgent leaders to "unify diverse groups and organizations" and be of "[near] mythical status"[118] which are both important criteria in Metz' model.

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[116] *Ibid*., 7.

[117] *Ibid*., 7.

[118] *Ibid*., 7.

Finally, the success of an insurgency relies on procuring appropriate resources. Metz identifies five types of resources that insurgents need to succeed, "1) manpower; 2) funding; 3) equipment/supplies; 4) sanctuary; and 5) intelligence."[119] While the US would be able to provide military expertise and support to the insurgency, the responsibility for defining and growing local manpower for the cause would be the responsibility of the US-backed indigenous leadership. Nevertheless, the US contribution to the insurgency's resources would be significant. American conventional air assets would be capable of supporting areas that have been identified as friendly force sanctuaries. This could be achieved through the use of air power or unmanned aerial vehicles. Additionally, US sources could be used to help develop the intelligence picture. However, tactical level intelligence would need to be developed and managed by the indigenous insurgent forces themselves. The real benefit of a US supported insurgent force is that the often nefarious aspects of an insurgency could be avoided. Fear tactics, extortion and the standard criminality that is generally needed to finance the resources for an insurgency would not be necessary if the insurgency were supplied by the US. This would have a positive impact on how the insurgency is viewed by the population and as such would facilitate winning the support of the population and recruitment.

By applying the suggested method of fighting as an insurgency, American forces would have the ability to gain and maintain the initiative. Counterinsurgencies are by definition responses to an insurgent threat. Counterinsurgency forces "counter" the "insurgents." Thus, the initiative is always forfeit to the insurgency. The insurgents "do" something and it is the responsibility of the US forces to "counter" that which is being done. If the people, government and the military of the United States can change the way

[119] *Ibid*., 7.

they look at modern warfare, then it is possible that the US military will be able to regain the initiative in these types of conflict. Of course, the US could never use the term insurgency because of the tyrannical and subversive connotations. Rather, the US would need to look at the problem as on that warrants "supported freedom fighting" or the like. So how would this concept have looked had it been applied to the current conflict in Afghanistan?

As a basis for thought, imagine if the American Special Forces had not used vast amounts of air dropped munitions to dramatically tip the balance of power against the Taliban in the opening months of the conflict. The more conventional aspects of the war would not have ended as quickly as they had and the Taliban regime would have been forced to govern in the face of an insurgent threat focussed not so much on their destruction, but on undermining their already questionable credibility. The Taliban would have been forced to not only maintain order throughout the part of the country they controlled in 2001, but also would have had to seek-out and attempt to destroy US incursions.

Using Metz' model for successful insurgencies, the US could have worked in concert with Afghans to further degrade the credibility of the Taliban. Most importantly, by limiting US involvement to the maintenance of Metz' criteria for successful insurgency, the US would have forced their partnered Afghans to win the war for themselves instead of relying on American firepower to break-up and dissolve the Taliban regime. The US would need to support the gradual corrosion of the Taliban and the generation of an insurgency-based government that could slowly consume those parts of Afghanistan that the Taliban could not hold. In this fashion, the US supported

insurgency would be able to indentify and support capable regional leadership, congruent with how the Afghans would want to be governed - Afghan self-determination would be key to this method of warfighting and it would help to generate the sense of nationalistic pride identified through Metz' model.

As it was, the US, in partnership with the Northern Alliance, militarily defeated the Taliban inside of a few months, after which the country descended into chaos.[120] However, defeating the Taliban's capacity to wage war and breaking the utility of the Taliban ideology are two separate things. In the face of the US onslaught, the Taliban was forced to dissipated and later consolidated in Pakistan while the US and its fledgling coalition attempted to generate order. Thus, what the Afghans remember of the Taliban was that they were brutal, but at least the country was stable - which was favourable to the banditry and corrupt governance that followed the US invasion.[121] The purpose of a US insurgency would be to drive the Taliban and its supporting tribes apart rather than fuse them together – to facilitate regime change without having to physically overthrow the previous regime itself.

Basic military leadership training teaches commanders that to win in war the enemy must be defeated on both the morale and physical planes. However, in cases like Afghanistan, where the US is able to destroy a regime's capacity to wage war, notably its military hardware, so quickly, the morale of the enemy is affected but not eroded to the point of submission. The US' ability to destroy the Taliban's capacity to wage war did not invalidate the Taliban ideology; rather, all it proved was that a third world country

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[120] Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos*…, 87.

[121] Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 39.

was militarily incapable of winning a conventional engagement against the US or any force supported by the US - hardly a shocking conclusion for even the most fledgling military analyst. The Taliban was never made to feel as though its only options were to fight to the death, surrender or seek terms with the US and its Afghan partners. The Taliban was never made to feel helpless, instead, they quickly recognized that they were incapable of resisting the technological and military strength of the US and as such dissolved or sought refuge. Thus, while defeated militarily, the Taliban was not broken on the morale plane and as such they were capable of regenerating to fight the US and its allies years after the initial US attacks against the regime.

By forming and operating as insurgent units, the US could achieve a total war-like victory with limited war-like constraints. However, to do so, the US would need to resist the urge to rout the enemy inside of the first few months of combat. The enemy must be forced to believe that he has a chance. He must be encouraged to regroup his forces for subsequent operations against US partnered insurgents. He must be forced to believe time and again that success is possible if he is to be dealt a defeat on the morale plane. This can only be achieved if the US fights as an insurgency does in COIN-like contemporary conflicts. If the US uses itself as an example, it will recognize that the best way to defeat even the most powerful militaries or the most stable governments is through protracted insurgency.

If the US government seeks to achieve a total war-like victory, the institution that governs the enemy's nation cannot be completely decimated in the initial phases of the war. Those people that embody the ideology of the enemy cannot be forced to flee or hide-out in the country. For with them resides the hopes and morale of their subordinates

and the utility of their ideology. The regime must be left intact to flounder in the face of the US' insurgency. More importantly, when the ideals of the US supported insurgency have permeated the country in question, the ruling enemy regime must be available in some capacity to concede defeat and then be replaced by a recognizable authority. Only then can a total war victory be achieved in an intra-state conflict.

POSSIBLE CRITICISMS

While a counterfactual analysis does suggest that being a better insurgency may be a suitable method for defeating insurgent forces, there are some obvious and distinct challenges for the model. The first is the concept of time. Insurgencies take time and the longer soldiers are committed to a war, the longer they are in harms way and the greater the likelihood that casualty rates will rise. Fighting an intentionally protracted insurgency against an enemy regime will rile the more conventionally focused domestic pundits who will suggest that if the US had just fought a "shock and awe" campaign, the war would have already been over. Clearly, the concept of time needs to be addressed.

Another criticism for this model is might be that the US has already developed this concept in the form of "hybrid warfare." Units are already training in a method that will bridge conventional and unconventional warfighting so as to achieve the aforementioned counterfactual goals. Similarly, it could be said that the US has already run insurgencies or indigenous support missions in the form of support to the mujahedeen against the Soviet Union or training teams to South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem

respectively. However, the proposed methodology does have some fundamental differences from each of these scenarios.

Finally, the model needs to address the concept of failure. How would the model react to set-backs such as an instance where large groupings of soldiers are killed or war crimes have been committed? Additionally, how would the model respond to an enemy regime's conventional mobilization? Each of these challenges needs to be investigated in some detail to recognize the exigencies of the model.

WHOEVER OWNS THE TIME OWNS THE WAR

The proposed model does depend on a need to understand and accept that fighting as an insurgency will take a lot of time to generate the desired outcomes. Consequently, the US' concept of time needs to be investigated and manipulated if the US is to fight and win in an insurgent context. One of the more common and anonymous sayings in Afghanistan among US soldiers, Coalition forces, and the insurgents is that while the Western soldiers own the watches, it is the Afghans who own the time. This is a standard myth that continues to plague the minds of both politicians and soldiers who are forever in search of quick time-saving concepts or philosophies for bringing the war to a prompt conclusion. However, data generated by Professor Lyall shows that in the post-1945 period, the average war duration for a democracy is 137 months (11 years 5 months).[122] Certainly, had the US accepted from the outset that the war in Afghanistan would be protracted in nature, there may not have been such a rush to get in and win so very

[122] Lyall, *Do Democracies Make Inferior Insurgents*…, 185.

quickly. President Bush conceded that the war was not going to "end with the decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion."[123]

The concept of time must be manipulated and applied to the US' advantage, not only during the fighting, but also in the period leading up to any form of engagement. In the period following 9/11, the US had an opportunity to take its time before responding in a militarily offensive manner. Though stung by the attacks, American sovereignty was not threatened to the point of insolvency. Considering the value and importance of understanding language and culture, as an example, imagine how effective the US might have been had it taken two years to train its soldiers at home before the initial full scale troop deployments. The US' initial efforts could have been focused exclusively on containing the Taliban both economically and diplomatically while it oriented itself to the declared threat of "global terrorism." In so doing, the US intelligence agencies would have had an opportunity to develop their understanding of the country and its support-bases before American soldiers were introduced to the equation.

It could be counter-argued that if the US had waited too long, then public desire to get involved in a war in Afghanistan may have disappeared entirely or perhaps public outrage over the US' inaction would have forced the Bush administration to take quantifiable action. Yet, if a period of military inaction completely dissolved any desire to fight, then war was arguably not the best solution to the problem. Furthermore, the administration could have satiated its public's need for immediate retribution through an enhanced number of airstrikes against known Taliban or Al-Qaeda training camps; all the while educating the public as to the utility of patience and the purpose of its new "freedom fighting" strategy.

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[123] Bush's speech to the Joint Session of Congress following 9/11 attacks, 20 September 2001.

The threat of attack, amplified by a protracted period of time and coupled with diplomatic and economic isolation could have gone a long way to understanding and manipulating the strategic problem that Afghanistan presented to the US. This could provide the US with the initiative and the opportunity to engage at a time of its choosing in a manner of its choosing. If the US can accept that winning is more important than winning quickly, then it will be that much more likely to succeed in Afghanistan-like conflicts.

HYBRID HYPE

It could be argued that the proposed method for defeating enemy regimes is similar to the concepts of hybrid warfare, or can be likened to the type of support that the Central Intelligence Agency has been known to provide to fledgling anti-communist regimes. However, the proposed concept is different in many ways. Professor Michael Evans of Australia's Army Land Warfare Studies Centre writes that since the advent of globalization and the fall of the Soviet Union, there "has been the development of an unpredictable and complex pattern of armed conflict."[124] At each operational level, Evans sees warfare as having been split but mutually supporting along lines of modern (conventional, inter-state), postmodern (cosmopolitan, limited, focussing on peace enforcement and humanitarian missions) and premodern (trans-state warfare based on identity, extremism and particularism) schools of thought and application.[125] The US

[124] Michael Evans, "From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War," *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 134.

[125] *Ibid*., 135.

military has done its best to adapt to this fluid environment. In particular, the US Marine Corps developed the concept of the "three block war" which sees American forces trained and prepared to fight a full-scale conventional conflict on one block, conduct peace support operations on another block and finally fulfilling a humanitarian mission on the third block. Each of these missions is believed to be achievable not only simultaneously, but within the same area of operations.[126] Since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Marine vision of the "three block war" has continued along an evolutionary chain towards a new concept known as hybrid warfare.

Lieutenant Colonel Frank G. Hoffman, a Research Fellow in the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, has written about the emergence of "hybrid warfare." Hoffman suggests that contemporary and future wars will be "multi-modial or multi-variant rather than a simple black or white characterization of one form of warfare."[127] Hoffman's assertion does not appear to be particularly controversial; militaries have been discussing the issue of asymmetric warfare since the 1970s.[128] What does appear to be new is Hoffman's suggestion that the ability to fight in a regular and irregular manner be fused into a type of "Hybrid Warrior." Hoffman believes that the "binary choice of big and conventional versus small or irregular is too simplistic."[129] Yet, his recommendation for a capability that spans the two poles is equally simplistic as

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[126] *Ibid*., 135.

[127] Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges." *Joint Forces Quarterly* 52, (1st Quarter, 2009): 35; www.http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mth&AN=36826341 &site=ehost-live; Internet; accessed 6 January 2010.

[128] Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (January 1975): 175-200; http://www.jstor.org/stable /2009880; Internet; accessed 28 February 2010.

[129] Hoffman, *Hybrid Warfare*…, 39.

this is what the US and its allies have been doing for the past nine years in Afghanistan. Hoffman cites Australian officers Krause and Betz in saying that "we are destined to maintain and upgrade our high-end, industrial age square pegs and be condemned for trying to force them into contemporary and increasingly complex round holes."[130] Yet, the suggestion of bridging conventional and unconventional capabilities with an intermediate solution only serves to build a triangular peg for the same round hole.

The concept of hybrid warfare reinforces this paper's "intermediate warfare" argument. It is as though the US has found itself immersed in a multi-polar form of warfare and instead of attempting to understand how it is that it came to be in that position or whether its methodologies are conducive to winning, it has generated a hybrid vision of warfare that supports the US' intermediate commitments. Yet, Hoffman and those who see the creation of hybrid warriors as the "silver bullet" for modern war have overlooked a key lesson of modern conflict – there are no "silver bullets." This paper proposes that military thinkers be much more bold in the development of modern military thought.

Hybrid units are meant to fuse regular and irregular capabilities into small "super units."[131] This is nothing more than the repackaging of currently existing COIN experienced soldiers. Adoption of hybrid units suggests that the enemy will be willing to fight the US the way it wants to be fought – with units that are tailored to fight both conventional and unconventional threats. This concept is not only hopeful, but also self-

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[130] *Ibid.*, 38.

[131] Gerry J. Gilmore, "Squad-sized 'Super Units' May Best Confront Hybrid Warfare, Leaders Say," http://globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/06mil-090611-afps02.htm; Internet; accessed 06 January 2010.

serving considering the formation of hybrid fighting forces is a reasonably easy transition for units that are already training and operating in a COIN context.

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

The US military needs to go beyond what was attempted by the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1980s Afghanistan and the military's embedded training teams of 1960s South Vietnam. The funnelling of funds and weapons to Afghans in their war against the Soviet Union lacked the partnering and guidance that this paper's model proposes. Partnered American freedom fighters would make it possible for the US to develop the insurgent institution. The US would have a better concept of which leaders supported nationalistic ideologies and which were simply pursuing their own nefarious agendas and could take action to support those more altruistic leaders while mentoring and educating the less desirable leaders. Additionally, partnered operations would show the population that the US had a vested interest in not only the indigenous people and outcome of the conflict, but also a good understanding of the issues facing the indigenous population upon conflict termination. Finally, by having trusted US soldiers in the country, the American government would be in a much better position to appreciate the intricacies of the culture in question and better support the formation of a new republic once the old regime is deposed.

This proposed model differs dramatically from the US' embedded training teams of the Vietnam era because it does not attempt to generate indigenous forces in an American image, with American weapons or American military culture. Rather, it

embraces the indigenous culture and puts the onus on the US to provide support in a manner that will help the local population to maintain its cultural identity while undermining the legitimacy of the enemy regime. This method will have a far more enduring impact and keep the freedom fighters from looking like an American "puppet."

A final criticism of the model is the potential for failure and the consequent appeal of escalation. If it can be accepted that warfare is a battle of wills, then the only way that this model could be defeated is if the US no longer had the will to participate in the conflict. However, as demonstrated by the counterfactual analysis at the start of this chapter, the proposed method of fighting is designed to make it possible for the US to contribute to the war with little impact to their daily lives. Fighting a limited war in an insurgent manner dramatically reduces the impact to Americans at home in the US. Comparatively minor troop commitments, limited collateral damage and relatively low costs would make the conflict nearly invisible and thus make it possible for the US to maintain its commitment for a protracted period. However, the war would certainly not go unnoticed if there were a massive American casualty event or if a crime against humanity were committed by American forces. As discussed in chapter three, such events could lead US public sentiment to demand that the military either withdraw its forces or increase troops, or add oversight or protective equipment to mitigate similar events from taking place. To counter this type of public response, the US military would need to educate the public as to the utility of its methodology. There is little doubt that most democratic populations care about their soldiers, if the US could demonstrate how this new methodology cost time but little in blood or treasure, then there could be a greater expectation of tolerance for set-backs.

While novel, fighting against an insurgent movement as a better insurgency could be the next step in the evolution of warfare. Modern militaries have recognized the value of culture, language and winning the "hearts and minds" of indigenous populations and no method of modern warfare has been more effective than insurgency at winning in this type of environment. Through this chapter's counterfactual analysis, it has been argued that the US could fight as part of a partnered insurgency to not only win against enemy regimes abroad, but also as a method of maintaining a strictly limited commitment in contemporary wars.

CONCLUSION

In chapter one, this paper investigated the characteristics of limited and total war with a view to understanding how these two concepts relate to the US' commitment in Afghanistan. In particular, this chapter identified some of the more prominent paradoxes associated with fighting in a limited or total war context and how if one military is fighting in a limited manner, there is no guarantee that its enemy will keep its commitment to the war equally limited. Through this study, the reader was introduced to the notion that commitments to limited war are often conditional and as such the success of a military mission is not always dependent upon a General's operational prowess, but rather the sensitivity of the nation's domestic population. After introducing the concept of limited and total war, chapter two built onto the concepts by defining the nature of the US' commitment in Afghanistan by way of how the US fought and ended its initial engagement in the country.

Chapter two used Mandel's *Premodern Versus Modern Victory* model with a view to recognizing whether the US' war in Afghanistan is either total or limited warfare. By investigating how the US managed the war from an informational, military, economic, social and diplomatic perspective, it became clear that the US war in Afghanistan was being prosecuted in neither a limited nor a total fashion but rather an intermediate blend of the two. This realization of intermediate commitment established a need to study the impact of the US' intermediate war in Afghanistan with a view to understanding its implications regarding how the American public sees and supports the

war, the impact it has on government and finally the implications for the soldiers in theatre.

Chapter three highlighted how the people of the US and the pressures that they put on their government can have an impact on how wars are fought. By examining the relationship between "treasure" and "lives" it became clear that the loss of treasure was more acceptable than the loss of lives. Therefore, the fewer soldiers that can be committed to a conflict the better. Additionally, through the previous chapters, it has become clear that the government, as an institution, has difficulty engaging in or fighting in a limited context. As retired US Lieutenant Colonel Stephen L. Melton writes in his book *The Clausewitz Delusion* "America has no real theory of limited war because we have rarely ever sought to fight limited wars."[132] This is understandably the result of the government's need to satiate the population's desire to fight and win wars quickly in the hopes of reducing the costs in lives and money. However, the American desire to win through the use of better technology, and failing that, more people, overlooks the potentially obvious military lessons of the past sixty years. As Melton writes "Our military problem is not how to attack a stronger nation but rather how to focus our military power in countries far weaker militarily and achieve worthwhile results."[133] This problem is one that must be resolved by unifying the needs of the people of the US with the objectives of the government to ensure that the appropriate objectives and tolerances are established for the military. This argument establishes the basis for chapter four's recommendation for fighting future Afghanistan-like wars.

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[132] Stephen L. Melton, *The Clausewitz Delusion*, (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2009), 215.

[133] *Ibid*., 214.

Chapter four argues that the US and its allies need to generate their own insurgent units capable of operating in concert with indigenous forces to undermine and expose the weaknesses of the undesirable regimes. Hence, the real focus of American military innovation should not rest with how its "intermediate-war" units should be organized, but instead should be focussing on the methodology by which the military need to be employed to win. Only then can the doctrine and unit design be generated. The purpose of a US partnered insurgency would not be to crush the enemy's center of gravity or quickly depose existing regimes through the extensive use of firepower, but rather, the focus would be on undermining the credibility of the enemy's governing body and eroding any connection that it may have with its people.

There is no doubt that the US military is tasked to win American wars regardless of their type or scope. However, this cannot be done if the military does not first recognize whether the nation's commitment is limited, total or possibly, as this paper suggests, intermediate in nature. Once defined, the war will need to be prosecuted in a manner that takes into account what success is meant to look like and how that end state will be best achieved against nation's social and political tolerances – only then can a concept for troop employment and victory be developed and worked towards.

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