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## **Confronting the Unconventional: Innovation and Transformation in Military Affairs**

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**CONFRONTING THE UNCONVENTIONAL:  
INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION  
IN MILITARY AFFAIRS**

**David Tucker**

**October 2006**

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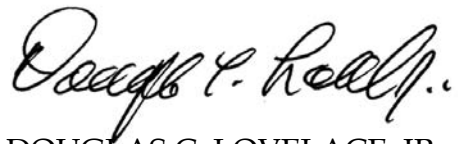
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## FOREWORD

The Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to transforming its conventional warfare capabilities. At the same time, DoD must increase its emphasis on irregular warfare. This ambitious agenda raises some questions. Are there limits to military transformation? Or, if it seems obvious that there must be limits to transformation, what are they exactly, why do they arise, and how can we identify them so that we may better accomplish the transformation that the U.S. military is capable of? If limits to military change and transformation exist, what are the broader implications for national policy and strategy?

Professor David Tucker offers some answers to these questions in this Letort Paper by analyzing the efforts of the French, British, and Americans to deal with irregular threats after World War II. He concludes that there are limits to transformation and offers an analysis of the effects of these limits on policy and strategy for the war on terrorism.



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## SUMMARY

As the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* for 2006 makes clear, the Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to transforming itself. In the years to come, it will continue to transform its regular or conventional warfare capabilities, that is, its capabilities to operate against the military forces of other states. But the *Report* also makes clear that DoD must give “greater emphasis to the war on terror and irregular warfare activities, including long-duration unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and military support for stabilization and reconstruction efforts.”

This ambitious agenda raises some questions. Are there limits to military transformation? Are there some changes that militaries cannot or should not make? Or, if it seems too obvious that there must be limits to transformation, what are they exactly, why do they arise, and how can we identify them so that we may better accomplish the transformation that the U.S. military is capable of? For example, can militaries transform themselves to deal with irregular threats? Should they? Will efforts to transform at the same time both regular and irregular warfare capabilities conflict? Will one transformation frustrate the other? If limits to military change and transformation exist, what are the broader implications for national policy and strategy? If transformation of both regular and irregular capabilities is not possible, which should we choose? And, again, to what extent is that choice in our power?

The following case studies of three militaries (the French, British, and American) that confronted irregular or unconventional threats in the midst of significant conventional threats offer some answers to these questions. In each case, the issue or important point is not that militaries are static or find it hard to change, as is often said. In all three cases, the militaries did, in fact, change or transform themselves. The important issue is which changes were possible, which proved superficial and faded, which endured and why. Answering these questions is important not just for defense planning and strategy. Answering them will affect national strategy as well, since DoD is part of a broader national effort to deal with the regular and irregular

threats we face. If we understand DoD's limitations, then we should be in a better position to devise an effective national approach.

As the case studies show, the three militaries responded to irregular threats, but did so differently and with different degrees of success. How do we explain these different responses? In the cases examined, external threats engaged the institutional interests and professional concerns of military officers and led to innovations. At the same time, military professionalism also led the militaries to see those threats through the conventions of the military profession. Political institutions and historical circumstances shape these conventions and help explain variations in the responses of the three militaries studied. But these variations take place within, and affect a larger convention common to all three that focuses on directly engaging and killing the enemy as the principal task of a military. Since this approach is not effective in irregular or unconventional warfare, to the degree that the militaries were limited to innovating within it, they failed. They were able to innovate but not to transform themselves to deal with irregular conflict.

Since the limitations that the militaries faced derived in part from historical circumstances, the conclusion of this monograph considers whether likely changes in these circumstances will improve the ability of the U.S. military to deal with irregular threats. The analysis considers the interconnected effects of four such circumstances or threats: increased irregular warfare; terrorist acquisition of chemical, biological, or radiological weapons; significant success for the Jihadist insurgency we now face; and the long-term rise of a great power rival. The analysis concludes that the best way to deal with both long- and short-term irregular threats is to establish two new organizations, a new kind of interagency organization devoted to unconventional warfare and an unconventional warfare organization within DoD.

Establishing these new organizations would acknowledge that irregular warfare has become a potent force but would not imply necessarily that the age of the nation-state and its distinctive style of warfare is over. It would imply only that nonstate forces are a serious threat; this is far less difficult to grasp since September 11, 2001, that nonstate forces pose a serious threat that deserves a transformative response different from, but as serious as the response DoD is making to the apparent revolution in military affairs in conventional warfare.

# CONFRONTING THE UNCONVENTIONAL: INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

## INTRODUCTION

As the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* for 2006 makes clear, the Department of Defense (DoD) is committed to transforming itself. In the years to come, it will continue to transform its regular or conventional warfare capabilities, that is, its capabilities to operate against the military forces of other states. But the *Report* also makes clear that DoD must give “greater emphasis to the war on terror and irregular warfare activities, including long-duration unconventional warfare, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and military support for stabilization and reconstruction efforts.”<sup>1</sup>

This ambitious agenda raises some questions. Are there limits to military transformation? Are there some changes that militaries cannot or should not make? Or, if it seems too obvious that there must be limits to transformation, what are they exactly, why do they arise, and how can we identify them so that we may better accomplish the transformation the U.S. military can or should execute? For example, can militaries transform themselves to deal with irregular threats? Should they? Will efforts to transform at the same time both regular and irregular warfare capabilities conflict? Will one transformation frustrate the other? If limits to military change and transformation exist, what are the broader implications for national policy and strategy? If transformation of both regular and irregular capabilities is not possible, which should we choose? And, again, to what extent is that choice in our power?

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and transient, which endured and why. Answering these questions is important not just for defense planning and strategy. Answers will affect even national strategy, since DoD is part of a broader national effort to deal with the regular and irregular threats we face. If we understand DoD's limitations, then we should be in a better position to devise an effective national approach.

To orient the reader as we set out, we may summarize what follows. The case studies examine how the French, British, and Americans dealt with irregular or unconventional conflict primarily in the 2 decades following World War II. These military establishments had varied success in thinking anew and in acting anew to meet the threat posed by irregular forces. In two of these cases (the French confrontation with revolutionary warfare and the American effort to combat insurgency), the challenge posed by irregular forces was understood to be, as the *QDR Report* says of our current conflict, "markedly different from wars of the past."<sup>2</sup> In both cases, some French and American defense officials, civilian and military, called for and encouraged innovations to meet the revolutionary threat their countries faced. In neither case were the innovations successful or enduring. The British, on the other hand, who understood post-World War II insurgencies to be different from conventional warfare but not unprecedented, did manage to innovate to counter this threat. The following sections present information about why these militaries did and did not innovate successfully in the face of unconventional threats, and why some innovations endured while others disappeared like fads. In these pages, we will encounter many of the same factors (e.g., external threats, bureaucratic interests, interservice rivalry) and actors (e.g., crusading civilians, military professionals and mavericks, immovable traditionalists) commonly found in discussions of military innovation. After assessing such factors and characters, the author draws some conclusions about the limits of military transformation and their implications for current U.S. efforts.

Military innovation has received a lot of attention over the past 15 years, but little of this work has examined innovation to meet unconventional threats.<sup>3</sup> This monograph attempts in some measure to redress this imbalance by looking at the development of psycholog-

ical warfare and counterinsurgency (or revolutionary warfare, as the French called it). Psychological warfare, psychological operations, political warfare, and covert operations, on one hand (all these terms were used immediately after World War II to refer to a similar set of activities), and counterinsurgency, on the other, are of course separate activities. This paper treats them together for two reasons. First, for historical reasons discussed below, the French, who first encountered what they felt was a new kind of warfare in Indochina, combined within their response to it the two forms that the British and Americans viewed as separate and distinct forms: psychological warfare and counterinsurgency. For this reason, a comparison between the French, British, and Americans should include both psychological operations and counterinsurgency.

Second, psychological warfare and counterinsurgency have an intimate connection. Insurgents work within and through a population to attack the government because they are not strong enough to attack the government and its military forces directly. In response, the government must work within and through the population to get at the insurgents, specifically, to get the intelligence it needs to kill or capture them and to cut off the resources and recruits they need to carry on the fight. Because they work through civilian populations, insurgency and counterinsurgency are more political than military struggles. True, force is not absent. Both sides use it to intimidate and build support. But it plays a less decisive role than in conventional military conflicts.

In keeping with their predominantly political character, insurgency and counterinsurgency require political organization, legitimacy, and persuasion more than does a conventional military struggle. For this reason, psychological operations or political warfare are more important in this kind of conflict than in conventional war. This was true in individual insurgencies but also, according to the leaders of France, Britain, and the United States, in the Cold War as a whole, which was why they all attributed to psychological or political warfare after World War II an importance that it had not previously enjoyed in their defense plans and strategies.

Two terminological issues remain. To this point, we have spoken of both sets of oppositional pairs – regular or irregular, and conventional or unconventional – in categorizing threats and forces. At the

risk of confusion with the modern term “unconventional warfare,” we shall use the terms “conventional” and “unconventional” threats and forces. These terms highlight the hold that established ways of thinking (conventions) have on our minds, reminding us of the part such ways of thinking may play in limiting transformation. As far as military and security affairs are concerned, conventions are established in two ways. First, nations and their militaries compete, with the nations and militaries that win setting a standard that others try to meet. The Prussians, for example, followed the example of Napoleon after he had defeated them; in the post-Civil War years, the U.S. Army looked to the Prussian Army as the standard-setter in view of its victories over the Danish, Austrians, and French. This view of how conventions are established rests on the assumption that militaries, like the individuals who compose them and the nation-states they serve, are rational actors who marshal available resources to achieve specified goals, such as national survival and prosperity.

This account is true as far as it goes, but not exhaustive since sometimes the weaker do not emulate the stronger, and at other times emulation, though attempted, remains merely formal.<sup>4</sup> The explanation for these varied results, at least in part, is that culture or ideas influence the actions of individuals, organizations, and nations. Thus culture becomes still another explanation of how conventions are established; established ways of thinking produce conventional actions. In the United States and Great Britain, for example, the interplay between conceptions of political liberty and distinctive forms of government has led to a certain understanding, not identical in each country, of the proper distribution of authority between civilian and military officials. As the discussion below will make clear, this understanding affected how the American and British militaries responded to the threat from insurgency. With regard to organizations, culture means “the set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and formal knowledge that shape collective understandings.”<sup>5</sup>

Competition and culture together, then, establish conventions, which are powerful facts of individual, institutional, and national life. In the case that concerns us, what we might call the warfare convention defines warfare as violence by the uniformed agents of

states who in principle do not target noncombatants. Unconventional conflict, by way of contrast, takes place in the midst of civilians and includes violence by actors, who may or may not be agents of a state, against noncombatants. Insurgency is a species of such unconventional conflict.

The second terminological issue arises in explaining why the U.S. military has had difficulty dealing with unconventional conflict.<sup>6</sup> Part of the explanation, we argue, is the professionalism of the American military, which makes it attentive to external threats but also inclined to understand them in a particular way. By professionalism, we mean self-regulation by practitioners who understand themselves and are understood by others to possess specific knowledge and skills that set them apart from others. Professionals regulate their activity in part by sharing certain ideas and principles of behavior, the mutual recognition and encouragement of which are what, to a large extent, defines a profession.

## **THE FRENCH**

### **Revolutionary Warfare.**

Almost immediately following the end of World War II, the French began fighting the Vietminh for control of Indochina. The war lasted from 1946 to 1954. The French had technological superiority (armor and aircraft) and gained some initial success against Vietminh forces. However, as the French continued to seek out and engage their enemy, the Vietminh dispersed their forces, denying the French the decisive battles they sought. When it was to their advantage, the Vietminh engaged the French, operating in battalions, regiments, and divisions as expedient. Their commander, General Vo Nguyen Giap, explicitly followed a strategy of prolonging the war, in expectation that the French would not be able to sustain their effort. To ensure their own endurance, the Vietminh undertook intense organizing of the Vietnamese people. During the course of the war, French Union forces (French and colonial forces) suffered 92,000 dead, 114,000 casualties, and 28,000 captured. Many of the dead, injured, and captured were from France's colonies, but the steady grind of the

war without apparent progress wore down public opinion in France. Support for the war by the French populace dropped from 52 percent in 1947 to only 7 percent in early 1954. When the fortress of Dien Bien Phu fell in May 1954 to a well-planned conventional assault, with several thousand more French casualties and many more taken prisoner, the French were forced to give up their Indochina colony.<sup>7</sup>

The defeat at Dien Bien Phu had a significantly adverse effect on French confidence. Coupled with the Suez disaster of 1956, it marked the contraction of French power and exposed the fractious ineptitude of the government of the Fourth Republic. Insufficiently funded and supported by its political masters, the French Army felt betrayed, setting in motion events that would help bring about the end of the Fourth Republic in 1958 and an attempted putsch against Charles De Gaulle in 1961, following his decision to grant Algerian independence.

The defeat also sent the French Army, or at least some of its officers, in search of an explanation. How could a small, backward colony have defeated its metropolitan master? The answer to this question began to emerge in meetings and training sessions even before the war in Indochina had ended. It appeared in the pages of professional military journals shortly after Dien Bien Phu, as the French began another war, this time for control of Algeria, an integral part of France.<sup>8</sup> The explanation for their defeat was that the French had encountered a new kind of warfare—revolutionary warfare. Unlike classical warfare, in which one military force sought to defeat another in order to gain control of territory, revolutionary warfare sought to control a territory by controlling its population. That was the point of Vietminh efforts to organize the Vietnamese people. The decisive fighting of the war took place not on the battlefield where the French had the advantage, but in the hearts and minds of the French and Vietnamese populations, where the Vietminh built an advantage through inducements and coercion. The Vietminh avoided pitched battles, hoping to exhaust not just the French Army, but the French people, while organizing the Vietnamese population so it could withstand a long struggle.

The organizing effort had two components. One was political warfare. The Vietminh infiltrated all sections and levels of society through a system of committees. These committees paralleled

the official political organizations at every level (hamlet, village, province, etc.) and included a series of social committees (of the young, the old, women, etc.). The result was a system that, as explained by Charles Lacheroy, one of the most famous of the French students of revolutionary warfare, allowed the Vietminh to take physical possession of people. But this component—political warfare—was not sufficient. The second required component of revolutionary warfare was psychological warfare. The Vietminh aimed to take control of people’s hopes and fears, loves and hates—to take control of people’s souls. To do this, they used a variety of measures ranging from propaganda to brain-washing, supported by physical punishment. The French referred to these measures as psychological warfare. Political warfare and psychological warfare together made revolutionary warfare. Revolutionary warfare had allowed the Vietminh to beat a force that by conventional measures was far superior. Thus revolutionary warfare was itself a revolution in warfare.<sup>9</sup>

Having diagnosed the problem, French officers knew the remedy. The French military had to transform itself by adopting the techniques that had defeated them. In adopting these techniques, “The Army,” explained a French officer, “was thinking only of turning against an enemy the arms that he used. What could be more normal in war?” Otherwise, he argued, the Army would simply fail to adapt itself to the kinds of struggles it would face in what he called the “era of the masses.”<sup>10</sup>

The French decision to imitate the Vietminh provides a good example of the process by which conventions are established. In this case, of course, the convention at issue was one that challenged conventional warfare as it had developed over several 100s of years of European history; but the process was the same as that which made the German Army the standard of excellence in the late 19th century European world: imitating the stronger. The convention-establishing impulse pushing the French to take psychological warfare seriously in the early 1950s had been foreshadowed by the success the Americans and British had had with it during World War II. This success was all the more striking to the French because, prior to World War II, neither the British nor the French had any real psychological warfare nor even military information capability.

French efforts during the war had trailed behind the larger and more sophisticated efforts of the British and Americans, but following World War II, the French were eager to develop an information and propaganda capability.<sup>11</sup> Hence the French produced films to reeducate the German population in the French zone of control and, in 1946–47, established French army offices to provide information to the public on the Army's activities and to look after its morale. These were modeled on similar offices in the U.S. Army.

An important event in the developing French interest in the psychological aspect of warfare was the struggle over French involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The French Communist Party, a powerful player in French politics, opposed French entry into the North Atlantic Treaty. The French government came to believe it necessary not merely to react to communist propaganda hostile to the treaty, but to sell the treaty proactively to the French people and to deflect the subversive effects of the propaganda on the people and the Army. To accomplish this, the French government used what it called "psychological action." Psychological action consisted of measures taken to influence friends; psychological warfare was measures taken to influence or intimidate enemies. In February 1950, for example, the Minister of Defense ordered the chiefs of the three military services to counter actions by the Communist Party that were contrary to the national defense. A few months later, the French government published a decree that gave to the Ministry of Defense the responsibility for assisting the government with psychological action as it pertained to issues of national defense. This was the first time that a psychological function had been assigned to the Ministry. In 1952 the government set up an interministerial committee that was supposed to develop a doctrine for psychological action. Since this task appeared to mean, at least to some involved, establishing the principles upon which public support for national defense would rest, it was set aside as too political. The committee worked on other issues instead. A further step in the institutionalization of psychological action was taken in November 1952 when the Minister of Defense set up a separate office of psychological action and information. For the first time, the military now had personnel designated as "psychological action officers."<sup>12</sup>

## **The Rise to Preeminence of Revolutionary Warfare.**

The military took much of the initiative in conceptualizing and institutionalizing psychological action, psychological warfare, and the broader concept of revolutionary warfare. It established a psychological warfare course at the École de Guerre in 1954 to train French officers to work on psychological operations at Allied headquarters. This was followed by the establishment in 1955 of psychological action sections at Army headquarters to replace an office of morale and information. A month later, the military established psychological action offices at various levels of command in the 10th military region (Algeria). In 1956, the military set up a psychological warfare training center in Paris, and introduced psychological warfare doctrine into its educational system to prepare its officers for the new mode of warfare and its use in Algeria. In the same year, it also organized four loudspeaker and leaflet companies, dispatching three of them to Algeria, and arranged for officers who had survived the Vietminh prison camps to travel throughout Algeria, teaching the principles of psychological warfare.<sup>13</sup>

As this activity on the part of the military continued, a new government came into office in January 1956. The Defense Minister was Maurice Bourges-Maunoury. Sympathetic to the doctrines of revolutionary warfare and psychological operations, he endorsed and made official the initiatives the French military already had taken. On January 23, 1956, Bourges-Maunoury set up a psychological action and warfare committee within the Army Chief of Staff's office. The same day, Charles Lacheroy was attached to the headquarters staff as the officer in charge of psychological operations. A month later, when the committee met for the first time with General Ely, the new Chief of Staff, as its chairman, Lacheroy assumed responsibility for the committee. In April, Bourges-Maunoury created an information and psychological action office, with Lacheroy as its head, attached directly to the office of the Minister of Defense. In May 1956, Lacheroy's committee considered and approved the idea of creating military staff organizations in Algeria to be responsible for psychological warfare, the soon-to-be-famous "5eme bureaux." These offices were, in principle, equivalent in authority to the other



Bureaus of the French Army, such as those for operations (*3eme Bureau*) or logistics (*4eme Bureau*). Establishing a 5eme bureau in Algeria gave psychological warfare a stronger institutional basis. For example, once the office was set up, it took charge of the Center for Training and Preparation in Counter-Guerrilla Warfare in Algeria, previously under the control of the 3eme bureau, which had been on the verge of closing the Center.<sup>14</sup>

The official sanctioning of revolutionary and psychological warfare is clear in remarks that Bourges-Maunoury published in the *Revue militaire d'information* in July 1956. The Minister began by acknowledging that France was undertaking a policy of reform in Algeria, but that these reforms should not be seen as concessions to the terrorists. They were not a sign of weakness but of the strength of France's longstanding commitment to Algeria, a commitment that made failure there unthinkable, according to the Minister. Before turning to the role of the Army in the conflict, he acknowledged the sacrifices that "the great national effort" required of France and her citizens. He described France's Army in Algeria as an Army of pacification. The Army thus had a new role, according to the Minister, a role marked by the evolution of the military art over the preceding 20 years. This new role was necessary because the rebels in Algeria were practicing psychological and revolutionary warfare. France's Army was adapting itself to these new modes of warfare, the minister contended, new modes he was sure would appear in other conflicts. The result was that France no longer had an Army only of soldiers, but one of builders, doctors, and pioneers as well, an Army of propaganda and an Army in contact with the population.<sup>15</sup>

Bourges-Maunoury's article in the *Revue militaire* shows the degree to which he had accepted both the diagnosis and the remedy that theorists of revolutionary warfare offered: the struggle in Algeria was over the loyalty of the Algerian people; the key to victory was not defeating an enemy force or seizing territory, but winning that loyalty. Further evidence of both the importance of revolutionary and psychological warfare and its penetration of the French defense establishment emerged in 1957. In July 1957, Chief of Staff Ely approved and Bourges-Maunoury, now Prime Minister, signed a directive on psychological action. The directive aimed to define the

general principles of “the psychological arm,” specify responsibilities with regard to psychological warfare, and review the tools that this new kind of warfare provided commanders. In November 1957, the Commander of the Army Corps in Algeria presented the new doctrine to France’s allies at a meeting at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). By the end of 1957, psychological warfare staff offices were in place in the headquarters of the French Army, in all the military regions, and in French forces in Germany.<sup>16</sup> The existence of *5eme bureaux* gave psychological warfare a status comparable to that of the traditional organizations and activities of French military life.

The publication of the “Directive on the Psychological Arm” and its presentation to SHAPE represent for the French military the fullest acceptance achieved by the doctrine of revolutionary warfare and its accompanying understanding of psychological warfare. In different ways, both the Directive and the presentation show clear debts to the writings of the revolutionary warfare theorists; one of the most prominent of these, Jacques Hogard, was an author of the Directive. The Directive discussed the geopolitical situation only in general terms. It acknowledged that atomic weapons had changed both warfare, by making it almost unthinkable, and politics, by increasing the burden of fear that the average citizen had to support. It asserted that France was on the side of those struggling for freedom in the world. It used the notion of revolutionary warfare (which it, like the revolutionary warfare theorists, characterized as “permanent, universal, and total”) as the framework for discussing psychological action and psychological warfare. It distinguished these two, as we have noted, according to their targets, the former used against friends, the latter against enemies. Both were needed to counter revolutionary warfare. To prevail, the government and the military had to win hearts and souls in France and overseas.

The Directive then discussed at length the tactics, techniques, and procedures of psychological action and psychological warfare, carefully distinguishing the two and what was permitted in each. The presentation to SHAPE gave a more detailed analysis of the geopolitical situation, dwelling on the struggle between communism and freedom in the world, the advance of communism toward world

domination, and the betrayal of France by some of its allies (the United States and Great Britain), who recently had sent arms to Tunisia, arms that the French were certain would end up in Algeria. The advance of communism, the presentation argued, was occurring by an indirect route made necessary, in part, by the presence of nuclear weapons on both sides, which made traditional large-scale warfare too risky. The presentation avoided detailed discussion of tactics and techniques. Like the Directive and the revolutionary war theorists, however, it saw revolutionary warfare as the key threat to freedom in the world and argued that the objective of this kind of warfare was not control of territory, as was the case in classic warfare, but control of populations. It thus saw psychological warfare as central to the defense of freedom and the West.<sup>17</sup>

What accounts for the rapid rise to prominence in France of revolutionary and psychological warfare? Most discussions of innovation assume that institutions generally resist change. The military often is thought to be particularly resistant to change, yet in this case much of the impetus for change came from within the ranks of the French Army. Moreover, the proponents of revolutionary warfare were telling their colleagues in the French military that it had to change root and branch. Bourguès-Maunoury's description of the French Army in Algeria as one of builders, doctors, and pioneers makes clear the extent of the transformation required. Rather than destroying enemy forces, the French military would be building schools and improving public health.

Analysts and historians have suggested a number of explanations for the rapid acceptance of revolutionary and psychological warfare. For example, one argues that these theories received wide support because they allowed France to explain why it should keep its empire and its *mission civilatrice* after World War II, when the dominant opinion among its allies was that such colonial posturing should be abandoned. He also argues that revolutionary warfare allowed the French to regard themselves as important despite their recent defeats and lack of nuclear weapons. Unlike the nuclear-armed British and Americans, the French had faced and now understood the new warfare. Finally, he argues that revolutionary warfare theory gave to the French Army a privileged position in the French

defense establishment vis-à-vis the Air Force and the Navy, and to its exponents a privileged position in the Army.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis in this analysis is not on the intrinsic merits or demerits of the new doctrine, but on the way it served to protect vested interests, either France's or the French Army's. According to this view, the new doctrine called for innovation and transformation, but in doing so, protected established interests and therefore was accepted widely within the Army, contrary to our expectations about military establishments and innovations.

Of these interest-based arguments for the adoption of revolutionary warfare doctrine, the most plausible is the notion that the new doctrine transformed what really was just colonial warfare, something France's allies would not support, into a new mode of warfare critical to the survival of the West, which France's allies presumably would be eager to support. Yet, even this argument seems suspect, since the partisans of revolutionary warfare continued to adhere to the doctrine, even after the Allies refused to accept what the commander of the Algerian Army Corps, General Allard, presented to them at SHAPE. What purpose did the new doctrine serve once it had failed to win Allied support? One possible self-interested purpose was to give the Army a special position in the French military establishment, to compensate it for the presumed Naval and Air Force monopoly over nuclear weapons. The advent of nuclear weapons did contribute to the development and acceptance of revolutionary warfare theory. Its partisans argued, as General Allard did, that the new weapons meant that traditional wars could no longer be fought, and aggression would now take the indirect route of revolutionary warfare. We today may as well take this argument at face value. It has come to be generally accepted; historical experience over the past 50 years or so supports it. It was not simply a ruse to maintain relevance for the Army or some Army personnel as nuclear weapons developed.

It is true that interest in revolutionary warfare doctrine developed at the same time as, though more quickly than, the interest in nuclear weapons. This might suggest that the development of revolutionary warfare theory was the Army's response to this internal or interservice threat to its resources and prestige. The French, however, were

rearming at the same time as they developed nuclear weapons, so the interest in nuclear weapons did not necessarily disadvantage the Army in the fight for resources. In addition, many of those who were prominent supporters of revolutionary warfare were from technical fields in the military or from the Air Force. If preferment was what they wanted, then support for nuclear weapons or other modern technologies would have provided it. Yet, they chose to support revolutionary warfare.

Moreover, if compensation for lack of a nuclear role explains support for revolutionary warfare among certain officers, how do we explain support for this doctrine among civilians? Clearly, the position of political figures was not threatened by the development of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, if the French Army had wanted to assure its significance alongside the Navy and Air Force, it could have emphasized its importance in the defense of Europe and of metropolitan France. These were traditional roles, unlike the efforts revolutionary warfare seemed to call for, which tended to turn the Army into a kind of peace corps, as Bourguès-Maunoury's description of the Army in Algeria makes clear. The traditional role in Europe was, in fact, one that many in the Army chose and supported throughout the days of revolutionary warfare. For example, a prominent Army general resigned in 1956 over the decision by Bourguès-Maunoury to break up mechanized units in Germany in order to send them to Algeria. Finally, if it is true that junior officers supported revolutionary warfare doctrine because they thought it would enhance their position in the Army, how do we explain the young officers who did not support it? Presumably, they hoped for advantage in promotion just as did those who supported revolutionary warfare, so this motive alone does not account for support of the new doctrine.<sup>19</sup>

Generally speaking, there appear to be no simply self-interested motives sufficient to explain the rise and spread of revolutionary warfare doctrine among the French military. While it is no doubt true that some officers were attracted to revolutionary warfare doctrine because it appeared to preserve the human element in warfare in a "push-button" age, the new doctrine did not appeal only to nontechnicians who wished to prevent a loss of status to the technicians of a modern Army. The most important although not

sole prompter of support for the new doctrine appears to have been the experience of engaging in revolutionary warfare, particularly in Indochina. The war in Indochina had a profound effect on those who fought in it. Among other things, it caused younger officers to question the accepted ways of doing things in the French military, particularly the unsuitability of its methods for the war in Indochina. It created in the younger generation a tendency to question the Army's habits and traditions, including, ultimately, its traditional subservience to civil authority. But before that extreme had been reached, it created a disposition to accept new doctrine and a desire among many of the best officers for innovation in and renovation of the military. Concerned with the defense of France and its interests, soldiers turned to revolutionary and psychological warfare doctrine in response to a serious threat. In other words, they responded as professionals, as individuals with a sense of themselves as an independent self-regulating group dedicated to something beside their self-interest. That "something" was the defense of France. An event so unexpected as the French defeat in Indochina by an inferior force cried out for an explanation, particularly as the same problem seemed to be developing in Algeria. Revolutionary warfare theory supplied that explanation.<sup>20</sup>

We gain another perspective on the acceptance of revolutionary warfare theory by considering why it might have appealed to those who had not participated in the Indochina War (only about 40 percent of French officers did). Antoine Argoud, for example, one of the leading exponents of the new doctrine, did not fight there. In these cases, the success the new doctrine achieved appears due to its plausibility as a diagnosis of what had gone wrong in Indochina and, in the early stages, what was going wrong in Algeria. Acceptance was facilitated, in part, because it was possible to see the emphasis on working with the population, so prominent in revolutionary warfare doctrine, as similar to the methods of French colonial warfare in the 19th and early 20th centuries pioneered by Lyautey and Gallieni. According to these two colonial soldiers, attacks on rebels or bandits were supposed to be followed by constructive work in the colony that would tie the local population to France. Such a combined approach resembled revolutionary warfare doctrine. Although the

Army's instinct in Algeria may have been to attack and destroy the rebels, some civilian and military leaders came to see the need for a more constructive approach. This environment favored the growing acceptance of revolutionary warfare theory.<sup>21</sup> As we have noted, Defense Minister Bourges-Maunoury represented France's reform efforts in Algeria as a mere continuation of France's historic mission there (the reforms "vont dans le sens de l'histoire"). This patina of tradition may have helped France's military professionals accept revolutionary warfare as essential to the defense of France.

Two other factors appear to have worked in favor of the adoption of the new doctrine. First, the United States pressured the French to do something about communist influence in France, particularly as to the communist opposition to NATO. French politicians were themselves concerned with the communists and sought a way to counter them. This opened the way for doctrines of psychological action. Indeed, influencing French opinion and attitudes was part of the program of revolutionary warfare proponents. If the Vietminh won because they organized or politicized Vietnamese society, then, as some revolutionary warfare theorists contended, the French government or the military had to organize or politicize French society. Such thinking was part of the background that made acceptable to some military officers the direct involvement of the military in French politics, leading to the attempted putsch against de Gaulle. As noted earlier, in 1952 the interministerial committee had thought producing a doctrine on psychological operations was "too political" and abandoned the effort. But only 9 years later, the military tried to overthrow the government.

Second, the new understanding of the importance of unconventional warfare developed because some politicians, preeminently Bourges-Maunoury, saw revolutionary and psychological warfare theories as cures for the problem of Algeria. Unlike the traditional methods of repression that the Army first employed, the new doctrines offered at least hope that some way could be found to deal with the problem of Algeria in an acceptable way. One analyst has argued that the politicians did not have confidence in France's general officers because they did not think the old guard military understood the new doctrine. Another analyst says of "the military elite" that

it “proved itself, once again, too lethargic and unimaginative to understand changing modes of warfare,” perhaps because it had too much invested in established ways.<sup>22</sup> Senior civilian decisionmakers looked to younger officers, therefore, who were proponents of revolutionary warfare doctrine. These civilians supported the doctrine and its proponents with money and favored positions in France’s military and defense institutions. As the movement grew from below, nurtured by politicians, some general officers became converts to the cause, with their support helping to further embed revolutionary warfare in the French defense establishment.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Fall of Revolutionary Warfare.**

Recalling the rise of revolutionary and psychological warfare theories makes clear that although these theories gained wide support, neither won universal acceptance in the French officer corps or among civilians. As noted, the majority of French officers had not served in Indochina. Many of them, therefore, did not have the personal interest in or commitment to the new doctrine that the Indochina veterans had. This explains perhaps why the doctrine experienced a fall as rapid as its rise, once its political implications became apparent. Revolutionary warfare in Algeria led to the use of torture and other techniques (e.g., “brainwashing”) that created political problems for the Army in France. The association of so many of the leading theorists with the political involvement of the Army in 1958 and 1961 also discredited theory within the military. When de Gaulle, who had never been a supporter of revolutionary warfare, came to power, he extracted France from Algeria and won the Army’s support for a more conventional military role.<sup>24</sup> Revolutionary and psychological warfare theories lost their place in French military life.

The political problems outside the Army generated by the new doctrine were not the only reason it failed to maintain its position in French military life. The new doctrine generated problems within the military as well. To the new doctrine’s partisans, its broad scope meant that psychological action and warfare became not adjuncts to national defense but its leading element. The “Directive on the



Psychological Arm" issued in 1957 all but made this argument explicitly. It stated that "the final end of military operations was of a psychological order" and that "man, in his heart and spirit, is the essential objective of war and of psychological action." If it is man's heart and spirit that are the essential objectives of war, and if these are the domain of psychological action and warfare, then it would follow that the psychological arm is the heart and soul of warfare. The Directive even argued that nuclear warfare was a psychological arm because it could produce disarray in the souls of men. Comments in a similar vein, that "war in the common sense of the term [is] . . . an episode of psychological warfare," were heard in training and education sessions at French military schools. These theoretical implications were matched by practical ambitions. Lacheroy came to his new responsibilities with a plan to undertake "a great national reorganization." In Algeria, the "5eme Bureaux" acquired "responsibilities that were far removed from their original mission."<sup>25</sup>

The presumptions of the new doctrine and its growing influence bred resentment, opposition, and efforts to curtail it. In March 1957, for example, the Chief of Staff's office informed Lacheroy's committee that it could not disseminate lessons learned unless they were approved by the Chief's office. In Algeria, too, the 10th Military District resisted efforts by the psychological warriors in Paris to issue instructions in response to events. Psychological action was seen as a fad and was criticized for some of its ineffective experimental techniques. A military officer writing in 1960 remarked that certain officers believed they could win battles with loudspeakers and schools. By the beginning of 1960 in Algeria, one analyst reports, "senior officers as well as units in the field . . . were showing considerable hostility toward the staffs of the 5es Bureaux."<sup>26</sup>

Some of this resistance was no doubt the typical way in which bureaucracies tend to resist change. That ministers were constantly encouraging the chiefs of the military staff to take seriously and promote the tenets of psychological warfare shows that such resistance continued to exist. As late as 1958, communiqués suggest that the tenets of the new doctrine had not penetrated everywhere or deeply in the Army. As its military supporters tried to put the

new doctrine into practice, one analyst noted that they found themselves free of control by politicians from above but blocked by the military bureaucracy below. The effectiveness of the new doctrine, he remarked, would have been enhanced had the situation been reversed. In addition to these typical problems, adoption of the new doctrine was impeded by a lack of resources, which rendered premature the rush to put the doctrine into practice. The result was that psychological warfare was declared the true warfare without sufficient resources to make good the claim. For example, the Office of Information and Psychological Action that Bourguès-Maunoury established in April 1956 was at the center of power, attached directly to the office of the Minister of Defense. But for lack of personnel, it had to act through civilian or military offices over which it had no control. Worse, haste produced insufficiently trained practitioners, whose ineptitude discredited the newly proclaimed queen of battle.<sup>27</sup>

While the support of politicians was a major cause of the institutionalization of revolutionary warfare doctrine, the political disarray of the Fourth Republic was also one of the reasons this innovation failed. The new doctrine needed a firmer guiding hand and more support than the Fourth Republic's politicians were able to muster. It often was the political figures in the defense establishment who were best positioned among the civilian and military supporters of revolutionary warfare to promote the new doctrine, but they changed frequently. The Fourth Republic had 21 changes of Prime Minister in 12 years. The organization of the defense establishment suffered from a similar lack of stability. From 1945 to 1962, according to one count, there were at least 25 reforms of French defense structures, averaging one every 8 months. By another count, there were 15 reorganizations between 1946 and 1958.<sup>28</sup>

Within the military, the problem the new doctrine had to overcome was, in a sense, less complicated but more difficult. Revolutionary and psychological warfare were not just innovations. They represented, according to their proponents, a revolution in warfare to which France and the West had to adapt, or they would perish. This amounted, of course, to the claim that the French military had to change in fundamental ways. The Army in Algeria, Bourguès-

Maunoury announced, was a new kind of Army, because the military art had evolved. But it was not a new Army, and many in the Army remained not very evolved. In 1954, a decorated officer assigned to a public information position, an important job in the eyes of revolutionary warfare theorists, showed his medals to another officer, saying, "With these, I had a right to hope for something better."<sup>29</sup> The "paras," elite light infantry, who took pride in their ability to track down and kill the enemy, often clashed with the "Specialized Administrative Sections," French military personnel who worked with the Algerians and performed what the U.S. military would call civil affairs functions. These are just a few of the indications that many in the Army resisted the new doctrine because it required them to leave behind the conventional understanding of themselves, not only with regard to the role of the Army in politics, but with regard to the roles and missions of the Army in national defense.<sup>30</sup>

Just as support for the doctrine of revolutionary warfare was not simply self-interested but the result of professional concern for the safety of France, so should we conclude that attachment to conventional warfare among French officers was not merely an irrational longing for traditions. An officer in the French military might agree that the kind of warfare that defeated France in Indochina and appeared to be defeating it in Algeria was a threat to France, without agreeing that it was the only or most serious threat. As we have seen in the case of the general officer who resigned when armored units in Germany were broken up for the sake of the war in Algeria, opposition to revolutionary warfare could reflect a different evaluation of the external threats that France faced. Officers also could disagree over evolutions of the internal threats to France: the threat was not great enough to justify the innovation of military psychological action targeted at Frenchmen. One might well conclude that the conventional understanding of warfare and of civil-military relations was most appropriate for France's situation. In any case, no matter how reasoned, the attachment to conventional ways of thought and action was the most important cause for the failure of revolutionary and psychological warfare. These innovations required the transformation of the French Army. However useful the innovation, the transformation they implied was not acceptable

to enough French officers or civilian officials to allow the innovation to endure.

## **THE BRITISH**

The British experience with political or psychological warfare and insurgency offers a sharp contrast to the French experience with revolutionary warfare. We will consider first the development in Britain of political warfare, and then turn to the better known topic of British counterinsurgency doctrine.

### **Political Warfare.**

In 1950, as the French were just beginning to consider the importance of psychological warfare, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart reflected on the long British experience with that mode of war in a lecture at the Royal United Service Institution (RUSI). Lockhart, who had worked as a spy for the British in Moscow during the Russian revolution, had been the Director General of the Political Warfare Executive, the agency of the British government that handled propaganda abroad, during World War II. In his talk, Lockhart stressed that political warfare, "or psychological warfare as the Americans call it," was a regretful necessity: "I regard the modern form of political warfare as a necessary evil in war-time and as one of the greatest menaces to our civilization and standards of conduct in peace-time." Yet, Great Britain could not set aside this menacing technique in the cold war, a period of "neither peace nor war," because political warfare was being used against Britain every day "with great violence and cynical disregard for the truth." Indeed, Lockhart contended, political warfare was "the principal weapon of the cold war." Britain, like other democracies, was at a disadvantage in waging political warfare against a totalitarian enemy because its freedom could be exploited by that enemy, whereas the enemy's repression and secrecy largely were impenetrable. Still, Lockhart insisted that Britain should not try to remedy these disadvantages by "imitating the methods of the totalitarians." In other words, political warfare, as practiced by Britain, should occur within the constraints on government that a free society required. This was not the only

constraint under which it should operate, according to Lockhart. Political warfare, he told his audience, was not an independent force or power but a mere “handmaid of official policy and strategy.”<sup>31</sup>

Two years after his own lecture, Lockhart was on hand at the RUSI to introduce another political warfare expert, Richard Crossman. Among other things, Crossman, then a Member of Parliament, had been the Assistant Chief of the Psychological Warfare Department, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), in 1944–45. In his lecture and another given at the same location in 1953, Crossman presented political warfare in much the same terms as had Lockhart. He insisted that it could not produce results on its own. To be effective, political warfare had to be coordinated with diplomatic and military activity and subordinated to some overarching strategy. Citing examples from World War II where political warfare had failed when used on its own, he remarked that this was one of the principal lessons he had learned in the war. With regard to political warfare in the Cold War, Crossman argued that the totalitarian states were defined by the fact that they were always at war. This meant that, compared to the democracies, the totalitarian states had a greater unity of purpose.

For Crossman, this, in turn, meant that it was easier for the totalitarian states to mount effective political warfare campaigns. As he said to a questioner, “In peace-time, you will not be able to make a democrat accept the totalitarian concept that one overriding objective must be followed by everybody.” Far from seeing this difference between democracies and totalitarians as a liability or believing that it required the democracies to copy the methods of the totalitarians, Crossman saw the diversity of viewpoints in a democracy as an advantage. Crossman told his audience that by reporting “a bitter controversy” in a democracy one could “give an example to the enemy which is highly subversive.” He concluded his lecture by arguing for a limited use of psychological warfare, one appropriate for a democracy in peacetime, and cautioned his audience that, unless Britain was willing to become totalitarian, an absurd idea, it could not duplicate what Russia could do in this new mode of warfare. It is enough, he said, “to tell the truth, to build up credibility, [and] to understand our purpose.”<sup>32</sup>

The views of these two political warfare experts contrast sharply with the understanding of psychological warfare that was emerging in France. First, unlike French theorists, both Lockhart and Crossman argued that the British should not imitate their enemies, even though both Crossman and Lockhart admitted that these totalitarian enemies had distinct advantages in political or psychological warfare. Furthermore, although both men agreed that, during war, measures may be necessary that would be unacceptable during peacetime and that the Cold War was something between peace and war, neither argued for an unconstrained use of political warfare. Even Crossman, who acknowledged, as the French did, that the totalitarians were permanently at war, refused to conclude, unlike many French theorists, that Britain or the democracies had to respond in kind. To both of these men, imitating the enemy would have surrendered what success at political warfare was meant to preserve, the British way of life that included a commitment to civil liberties and limited government. To both Lockhart and Crossman, political warfare remained a regretful necessity.

In trying to fashion a political warfare weapon compatible with the British view of free government, Lockhart and Crossman represented mainstream British thinking. During the 1930s, as the British secretly planned for the propaganda component of a future world war, they refused to imitate what the Germans were doing, even though they acknowledged that the Germans excelled at propaganda. After World War II, when the British faced a string of internal conflicts in their colonies, they remained generally committed to British free speech traditions. During the Malaya Emergency, the Colonial Office refused to suppress press freedoms in Malaya because such a move would contradict "the longstanding tradition of leaving *opinion* free from government regulation."<sup>33</sup> We know of no British student of political warfare who ever suggested, as did French theorists, that winning the struggle against the totalitarians required adopting their methods.

The second way in which the British political warfare experts differed from their French counterparts was in their assessment of the importance of this technique. French doctrine on psychological warfare, we recall, implied that it was, in fact, the heart and soul

of modern warfare. Lockhart called political warfare “the principal weapon of the cold war” but did not claim that it was the essence of warfare. His insistence that political warfare had to be subordinate to policy and strategy suggests that he saw political warfare as just another weapon, one particularly suited to the situation of “not peace, not war” that existed between the Western democracies and the Warsaw Pact. Crossman, too, remarked that political warfare had to be subordinate to some overarching strategy if it were to succeed. Rather than being the heart and soul of warfare, as the French doctrine on psychological warfare claimed, Lockhart and Crossman saw it as only another tool to carry on the fight.

Perhaps the principal cause of the differing British and French views of psychological warfare was the difference in their level of experience with it. The British were long familiar with psychological warfare and had faced an array of issues associated with it. The British had used political warfare effectively in World War I, or so they and their enemies thought. Although the British government dismantled its political warfare capability when the war ended, it almost immediately began to rebuild it. The first efforts were the introduction of internationally oriented press attachés at some British Embassies, initiatives to lure tourists to Great Britain, and initiating BBC foreign language broadcasts in the late 1930s. As official documents make clear, the point of these efforts, especially in response to the increasing power of totalitarianism, was to serve national interests by promoting British prestige and influence in the world.<sup>34</sup> The deliberate effort to use information to promote national interests in the emerging struggle with the totalitarian powers defined these efforts as political warfare.

In addition to these various overt efforts, by 1938 the British had been trying secretly for several years to prepare to use propaganda in a possible war with Germany. The initial impetus came from the Air Ministry in 1935. As the military planned for a possible conflict with Italy over Abyssinia that year, the questions of both censorship and propaganda arose. This led a press attaché in the Ministry to consider the issue in the context of a conflict larger than a clash in Africa. He wrote a memorandum arguing that the organization of propaganda in World War I had been deficient and should be improved if another such war broke out. This led to the

establishment of an interministerial committee to consider the issue and eventually to plan for the possibility of war. The French had no comparable experience. Between the World Wars, they did nothing to develop a political warfare capability. A British civil servant sent to coordinate a propaganda plan with the French in 1939 reported that such coordination was impossible "because the French had no plan."<sup>35</sup>

Although the British did some planning, they also did a good deal of bickering. Infighting among the different ministries and organizations involved in information and propaganda efforts continued even through the first year or so of World War II.<sup>36</sup>

This bickering and infighting arose from the petty jealousies, turf fights, and resource conflicts typical of bureaucratic squabbling, but these fights also involved substantive issues, many of which the U.S. Government continues to wrestle with. Everyone seemed to agree that effective political warfare required the coordination of all sources of information. But did that mean that the BBC, for example, should be run by the same organization that disseminated disinformation to enemy countries? Would this not hopelessly compromise the reputation for truthfulness that made the BBC so effective? If one distinguished between information and propaganda, the latter of which required hiding its source, should propaganda be handled by a separate ministry or combined with the organizations that carried out sabotage activities overseas, and which therefore had expertise in hiding the British hand? Since all these efforts were part of the more general effort to support British foreign policy, should not the foreign office have a key role or perhaps the directing role? But was the Foreign Office competent to direct such efforts? And what role should the military have? Did it not have its own interest in and need to exercise a propaganda function, as various officers argued in the 1930s?<sup>37</sup> As British officials debated these questions, they were developing their understanding of political warfare, and how it fit into Britain's political and institutional life. In the 1930s, the rise of the totalitarian powers prompted these discussions; they did not occur after a surprising and devastating defeat, such as the French suffered in Indochina, a defeat that might have encouraged a search for radical solutions.



When one compares the theorizing approach to psychological and revolutionary warfare of the French to the more practical, empirical approach of the British, one might be inclined to see this as a confirmation of national stereotypes. There is some truth to this view. Although some authors speculated about developments they thought were changing the nature of warfare,<sup>38</sup> the British generally remained close to their experience. They tended not to claim that the changes they noticed were revolutionary or that responding to them required a fundamental break with British practice. These were also the views expressed by Lockhart and Crossman. Institutionally, as well, the British tended to operate in a recurring cycle. Seeing political warfare as a “regretful necessity,” the British would not devote resources to it until an external threat made that necessary. As soon as that threat disappeared, the government dismantled its political warfare capability, as it did after World Wars I and II. As a new threat appeared (Germany in the 1930s, the Soviet Union in the late 1940s and early 1950s), the government re-created that capability, incorporating a few changes based on past experience.<sup>39</sup>

By the time of the Cold War, the British had learned to keep the overt and covert parts of their information efforts separate but to try to coordinate them through interministerial committees. They had also, as represented by the lectures of Lockhart and Crossman, come to understand the dangers to democratic government inherent in psychological operations. One might characterize the British approach as adaptive rather than innovative, but the cumulative result was an institutional and doctrinal arrangement that allowed the British to use political warfare for the purposes and within the limits of democratic government.

### **Counterinsurgency.**

When we look at the development of what the British came to call counterinsurgency – what the French called revolutionary warfare – we see a process and result similar to those occurring with political warfare.<sup>40</sup> The British had been contending with border and internal security problems in their empire for generations by the time World War II began. Indeed, the British continued to deal with them during the war. What the British had learned through these efforts was

compiled in such books as Colonel C. E. Callwell's *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* and Charles Gwynn's *Imperial Policing*. These books and a host of articles in military journals described operations against bandits or rebels who were operating as more or less self-contained armed bands. Thus, in general, these books and articles emphasized military operations and not any larger political context. In imperial policing, political warfare was not very important. The tone is captured in Callwell's remark that:

the most satisfactory way of bringing such foes to reason is by the rifle and the sword, for they understand this mode of warfare and respect it. Sometimes, however, the circumstances do not admit of it, and then their villages must be demolished and their crops and granaries destroyed; still it is unfortunate when this is the case.<sup>41</sup>

Not every author had quite Callwell's starkly candid tone, but in addressing their imperial policing duties, the British tended to put the emphasis on effective military campaigning.

The British took this approach despite their experience in Ireland in 1919-21. There they had encountered something more than just self-contained armed bands. What they had fought in Ireland was an armed political movement, in which the armed force relied on the Irish people for support and intelligence and, in turn, helped form, sometimes coercively, the people's political views and motivation. In essence, this was the phenomenon that the French would come to call revolutionary warfare. Against the Irish, the British finally did develop a political warfare or propaganda campaign. In the interwar period, the colonial conflicts the British engaged in were more like small wars or antibandit campaigns than political or revolutionary warfare.

Some officers noted that changes were occurring—the rise of the masses, and therefore the development of mass politics, communication, and propaganda with their effects on world opinion—that would require a different response from the British. For example, when discussing the use of propaganda in guerrilla war in 1927, one officer argued that “modern methods of communication” and what he described as the increased civilization of the Great Powers meant that the Great Powers could not respond to colonial insurrections with the ferocity they had used in the past. If they did so,

guerrillas would use the new communication technology to exploit the more humane sentiment in the cities and the larger world to the disadvantage of those powers. So potent was this new combination of communication technology and sentiment, the officer argued, that it might even topple the metropolitan government. This gave the guerrillas a new and significant advantage over the Great Powers.

The guerrillas gained another advantage by the invention of powerful weapons (automatic weapons and high explosives) that could be concealed easily on a person or in a city and therefore were well-suited to implement “the first principle of guerrilla war” – rapid concentration and dispersion.<sup>42</sup> Despite these new developments, by and large, it was not until after World War II that the British, like the French, consistently faced armed political warfare in their overseas territories.

As Timothy Llewellyn Jones has shown in painstaking detail,<sup>43</sup> the British responded to this postwar conflict by drawing on their accumulated experience, modifying their practice in response to what they learned in each of their postwar counterinsurgency campaigns. What gradually emerged was the recognition that the postwar conflicts in the colonies were different from the rebellions or banditry of the past. The difference was that, inspired by nationalism and organized politically, the native populations of the colonies had changed from largely inert observers of British operations against rebels and bandits into decisive participants in the struggle. Recognition of this change did not come to the British at once. Nor did it seize the military or the government as a whole at any time until rather late in the process, if then. It dawned in a piecemeal and halting fashion. As the British worked themselves through a succession of campaigns, they came to see that force alone was no longer sufficient to deal with colonial conflict. They had to pay attention to the allegiance of the people. Psychological and political dimensions of the struggle were decisive.

The history of British colonial warfare and counterinsurgency is the story of how the British adapted to these changes. The learning process was halted temporarily by World War II, but picked up its pace after the war ended. Some officers, like Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, who for a few of the immediate postwar years was Chief of the Imperial General staff, remained attached to traditional

methods. When an officer who became an early convert to the new counterinsurgency methods explained the approach to him, Montgomery replied testily, "I cannot follow such reasoning."<sup>44</sup> Yet others, more and more as time passed, could. Hence, almost without knowing it, the British developed a successful approach to respond to insurgency. This included the key provisions of integrating civilian and military efforts; paying attention to information, public opinion, and propaganda or psychological operations; and limiting the use of force.

In the case of both political warfare and counterinsurgency, no British theorist emerged declaring a revolution in warfare that would have challenged long-held views of the proper role of the British military or its relation to civil authority, as happened in France. On the contrary, both Crossman and Lockhart warned against such thinking. In the case of both counterinsurgency and political warfare, the British responded to changing external threats and enduring domestic constraints and then adapted their organizations and doctrine. The British Army was able to do this, in large measure, because it became a professional organization at the height of the British Empire when imperial duties required adaptation, and the geopolitical situation forced the Army to respond to a variety of circumstances and conflicts rather than focus on conventional warfare in Europe. Adaptability became part of the British military's understanding of itself as a professional organization.

This professional ethos developed with and through the intervention of civilians in military affairs and the involvement of the military in politics. Again, this explains, at least in part, the ability of the British to deal with forms of conflict like insurgency that have a decisive political component.<sup>45</sup> As a practical matter, the adaptability of the British Army was in keeping with a somewhat self-deprecating, improvisational British national style, jauntily epitomized by Crossman in his remarks on political warfare. Describing how British efforts in this new method of warfare had changed in keeping with "the phases of any normal British campaign," he said that the British "nearly always start by being defeated and nearly always end by occupying the enemy's country." Although almost willfully denying that they were doing anything new, and most certainly not revolutionary, the British were, in fact, over time devising enduring

innovative responses to new kinds of warfare. A comparison of the French and British experiences suggests that innovation to meet unconventional threats is more likely to occur and take hold in a military that is less connected to proclamations of revolutionary change that threaten the military's self-understanding.

## **THE AMERICANS**

### **Psychological Operations and Insurgency.**

The American experience with psychological operations was more like the British experience than that of the French. The United States used psychological warfare techniques during World War I but demobilized this capability when the war ended; resurrected it during World War II but demobilized it again; and then quickly had to reconstitute it as the Cold War developed. The American experience also was like that of the British in that the need for psychological warfare was not seen as a response to a revolution in warfare. Initially, its proponents represented psychological warfare as a potentially useful adjunct to conventional arms. After World War II, as the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union developed, some came to see psychological or political warfare as a decisively important component of our national security strategy. More so than the British, however, from the moment psychological operations first appeared, the American military as an institution remained largely opposed or indifferent to them, and later to counterinsurgency, even though civilian officials and some in the military argued that insurgency was a new kind of warfare that required a transformation of the way the military fought.

To get a sense of typical U.S. military attitudes toward psychological and unconventional warfare, and how deep-seated they are, we begin with some of the pre-Cold War military experience with these techniques, and then focus on the early Cold War years.

### **Psychological Warfare in the World Wars.**

American experience with psychological warfare or, more broadly, with the use of information to serve national interests,

dates from World War I. President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information 1 week after the declaration of war on Germany. Headed by a civilian, a former journalist, the committee included the Secretaries of State and War and the Navy Department. The purpose of the committee, never fully realized, was to coordinate the work of all federal agencies in the effort to build support for the war and American war aims at home and abroad, and to undermine support for the war within Germany itself. The military component of America's information or propaganda effort grew from the work of the Committee. Heber Blankenhorn, a journalist and pacifist who worked on the Committee, came to believe that combat or tactical propaganda could play an important role in the war effort. In particular, he believed that President Wilson's words promising self-determination, democracy, and justice might be used to undermine the morale of enemy soldiers, inducing them to surrender. He tried to get the Committee to produce such combat propaganda, but the Director of the Committee told Blankenhorn that such efforts were the responsibility of the military.

Consequently, Blankenhorn approached a friend in the Army for help and eventually came into contact with the Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Branch in the Military Intelligence Service, Major Charles Mason. As Mason and Blankenhorn talked during January 1918, conversations that ultimately included the Chief of Military Intelligence, Blankenhorn succeeded in persuading the officers that the military should set up a propaganda section. When the intelligence service was reorganized as the Military Intelligence Branch in February 1918, it included the Psychological Subsection. Blankenhorn, directly commissioned as a captain, was placed in charge.<sup>46</sup>

Blankenhorn and members of his unit arrived in France in July 1918, having been told by the Secretary of War, who strongly supported psychological warfare, that they were to work only for the Commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John "Black Jack" Pershing, and not for the Committee on Public Information. From July to the Armistice in November, Blankenhorn and his staff, working as part of the Expeditionary Force intelligence or G-2 staff, prepared millions of leaflets that were dropped by

airplane or balloon on German lines. The official history of the Expeditionary Force claimed that 75 percent of enlisted prisoners of war “had believed Allied leaflets, particularly the American variety,” and offered anecdotal evidence that the leafleting did produce surrenders, as Blankenhorn had thought it would.<sup>47</sup>

Immediately following the Armistice, the Army disbanded its psychological and propaganda offices. Some of the practitioners from these offices were transferred to the Political Section of the Military Intelligence Bureau, but even this section was cut from the staff in 1925. The demise of psychological warfare occurred amidst a general demobilization, of course, but the rapidity with which the psychological warfare apparatus disappeared suggests a lack of appreciation for its contribution to the war effort. This lack of appreciation was evident even during the war. Blankenhorn, for example, had trouble getting airplanes to drop his leaflets and gas for the balloons to carry them. Propaganda and psychological warfare remained a matter of minor importance to the Army and the Expeditionary Force. The Army Air Service generally thought of leaflet-dropping as a low priority. For example, then Colonel Billy Mitchell, ordinarily regarded as a visionary, told Blankenhorn that propaganda had no place in combat operations. Ironically, given Mitchell’s own subsequent encounters with the Army’s judicial system, he even threatened to court-martial Blankenhorn if he continued to try to get pilots to carry the leaflets. Mitchell was not alone in his attitude toward psychological operations. One student of Blankenhorn’s efforts argues that the Army’s first psychological warrior succeeded despite “the general indifference toward unconventional warfare displayed by combat soldiers and their hesitancy, if not outright refusal, to consider its use in support of operations.”<sup>48</sup>

The neglect of psychological warfare continued throughout the interwar years. By the time the United States entered World War II, only one active duty officer, Charles Mason, Blankenhorn’s original collaborator and now a lieutenant colonel, had any experience in psychological warfare. His initial efforts in 1940 and 1941 to do some planning for psychological warfare met, in his own judgment, with indifference in the War Department. Blankenhorn himself,

recalled to active duty at Mason's request, found that the Army was reinventing the psychological warfare wheel and that he had to fight the same battles all over again, this time with an Army that was, in his opinion, even less willing to accept the potential utility of psychological activities than it had been during World War I.<sup>49</sup>

More serious efforts to develop a psychological warfare capability began in 1941 thanks to the efforts of Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy. Impressed by what he thought the Germans had accomplished with propaganda in the opening years of World War II—another example of how conventions are established—he pressed the Army to create an office that could plan for psychological warfare. This office, established in June 1941 with great secrecy (Mason was not informed of its existence), and its variously named successors, provided analysis of enemy propaganda and liaison with civilian offices involved in the information or propaganda effort. The Army also established its first tactical radio teams about this time (although they did not deploy until later in the war), and produced a training manual for combat propaganda and other publications, including a lessons-learned report that was intended for the combat theaters.<sup>50</sup>

German activities in Europe and Latin America increased interest in propaganda and public morale among officials and others outside the War and Navy Departments. Long concerned over both the intelligence he was receiving and the state of public morale, President Roosevelt appointed William Donovan as the Coordinator of Information in July 1941. In 1942, Donovan's office was divided, in effect, into two components, the Office of War Information, responsible for both domestic and foreign information efforts (except for those in Latin America, which a separate committee handled), and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), under the Joint Staff, responsible for sabotage, subversion, guerrilla warfare, and, eventually, covert propaganda aimed at foreign audiences.<sup>51</sup> The Army transferred its responsibility for psychological warfare to OSS in late 1942 and shut down its psychological warfare office. This move had the effect of decentralizing control of psychological warfare since OSS had no authority over theater commanders, who were now in effect operating without control from Washington. A year passed before the military opened a central office. It did so because C. D.



Jackson, a civilian from the Office of War Information, who was then working as a deputy to the military commander of the Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, presented papers to Assistant Secretary McCloy arguing for the central office. These papers and a series of military assessments of psychological warfare, which acknowledged its utility, led to the reestablishment of an Army psychological warfare office in late 1943. This office remained in existence throughout the war, its principal function being the coordination of military psychological warfare activities and liaison with the civilian agencies involved in psychological warfare efforts. Operations remained under the control of theater commanders, with varying degrees of success.<sup>52</sup>

The greatest problem psychological warfare faced during the war was the mixed reception it received from the conventional military. Some commanders valued it and wanted it used in their area of operations (e.g., Dwight Eisenhower); most did not. Admiral Chester Nimitz banned it. Negative views of psychological warfare reflected attitudes deeply bred into the military. Like the highly decorated French officer noted earlier, who was insulted to find himself assigned to a psychological operations job, one veteran colonel on Eisenhower's staff who prided himself on being a tough cavalryman, was horrified, he reported, when Eisenhower asked him to take over command of the theater's psychological operations. Another officer assigned to a psychological warfare unit reported that commanders saw the unit as a nuisance, while enlisted personnel considered it a joke. A high-ranking officer reportedly remarked that "the Army exists for the purpose of killing our enemies, not for persuading or arguing them out of the war." Even the commander of Eisenhower's psychological warfare effort wanted to command combat troops. After getting the chance during a leaflet run to fire the guns on a B-17, he remarked that doing so made him feel "like a soldier again." Sometimes when psychological warfare demonstrated its effectiveness, it mitigated such ingrained attitudes somewhat, but the attitudes were a persistent characteristic of the American military outlook.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the prejudice against psychological warfare, it undoubtedly contributed to the Allied victory in World War II and consequently earned some support within both military and civilian

agencies of the government. One of the first analysts of America's psychological warfare efforts, who had access to the relevant officials and documentary evidence, concluded that there was significant support for psychological warfare across the government, if not in the military itself, by the end of the war. This support, however, tended to manifest itself in resourcing public relations or information offices. For example, in the summer of 1945, both the State and War Departments informed Congress that funding for the Office of War Information should continue (State was particularly concerned to keep the Voice of America going). Generals Eisenhower and Marshall told Congress that the U.S. occupation forces in Germany and Japan would have to provide motion pictures, radio, news, and magazines to the Germans and Japanese. The War Department maintained a public information office. Support for propaganda or tactical psychological operations tended to be more circumscribed, although some who supported these activities were influential. At the conclusion of the war, Eisenhower offered a positive assessment of psychological warfare, remarking that "without doubt, psychological warfare had proved its right to a place of dignity in our military arsenal."<sup>54</sup>

### **Psychological Operations in the Cold War.**

The support enjoyed by psychological operations and information campaigns was not enough to prevent their disappearance shortly after the war. President Harry Truman authorized closing the Office of War Information as soon as the war ended in August 1945. He shut down the Office of Strategic Services in September of that year, parceling out its functions to the State Department, which got research, and the War Department, which got the covert capability. When the war ended, Congress forbade government information campaigns in the United States and cut the funding for information activities and cultural affairs overseas by 50 percent between 1946 and 1948.<sup>55</sup> These actions reflected a general dislike of propaganda, the inability of the proponents of psychological operations to demonstrate in a compelling way its contribution to victory, and the focus among those involved in defense matters on reorganizing and streamlining the military once the war ended. Finally, even if the government

and the military had been more favorably disposed to psychological operations, many of those who had fought the psychological war would not have stayed around. They were journalists, artists, and advertising men who had done their duty and wanted to return as soon as they could to their peacetime pursuits.<sup>56</sup> The result was that, within a year or two of the war's end, hardly anything was left of the American wartime information management and psychological warfare capability.

What did survive demobilization were agency press offices and other activities such as Armed Forces Radio and the Voice of America that provided information to the American public or American servicemen and selected foreign audiences. It was these activities that so impressed the French. The military also kept alive in a much diminished form its combat propaganda capability. It used this capability overseas to deal with civilian populations in Germany, Austria, Korea, and Japan, printing and distributing newspapers and magazines and running radio stations and movie houses. In the United States, the Army formed an experimental "Tactical Information Detachment," performed some studies of psychological warfare, and did some planning for its use in a future war. This planning began in 1946 after an Assistant Secretary of the Navy suggested it was necessary. An interdepartmental committee – the State, War, Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC), which became the State, Army, Navy, Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC) after the establishment of the Air Force – conducted the planning. As it did so, America's psychological warfare capability continued to decline. In 1947, a memorandum to the Under Secretary of State from the SANACC reported that "the Department of State and the Military Establishment have no funds appropriated for psychological warfare purposes" and that "no psychological warfare specialist reserves exist within the Military Establishment or the Department of State."<sup>57</sup>

As America's psychological warfare capability withered, events overseas were suggesting that such a capability might be necessary even in peacetime. By 1947, communists had taken over Poland, Hungary, and Rumania and were attempting to take over Greece, while continuing to apply pressure on the government of Turkey. In

response, President Truman announced in March 1947, in what came to be called the Truman Doctrine, that the United States would supply military aid to countries under attack from communist rebellions. Other problems had emerged in Europe. The economic and political situation in France and Italy, both with large communist parties, looked bleak. Fears mounted that the communists might win elections in 1948 (communists already were in the cabinets of both countries; in France, the Minister of Defense was a communist). In response to this threat, Secretary of State George C. Marshall announced a program of economic aid for Europe in October 1947, a program that came to be known as the Marshall Plan. As the U.S. Government developed and announced these responses, it and its Western allies met with the Soviets in a series of conferences in Moscow to discuss peace treaties with Germany and Austria.

By the end of 1947, these conferences had produced nothing but a deterioration in relations between the Soviets and the Western powers. In September, the Soviets established the Communist Information Bureau (COMINFORM), which included communist parties in both eastern and western Europe, launching it with a speech by the Leningrad party boss in which he said, "The cardinal purpose of the imperialist camp is to strengthen imperialism, to hatch a new imperialist war, to combat socialism and democracy, and to support reactionary and anti-democratic pro-fascist regimes and movements everywhere."<sup>58</sup> Events outside of Europe, for example, in the Philippines, where a communist insurgency was underway, also caused concern in the U.S. Government.

This rising external threat prompted a response. Some weeks after the COMINFORM meeting, the Army representative to the SANACC sent a memorandum to committee members approving the committee's plans for psychological operations during wartime. The representative argued in addition, however, that the events of the recent past suggested the need to consider "as a matter of urgency [the] desirability or necessity [of] deliberate coordinated" psychological warfare in peacetime. The Director of Central Intelligence seconded this proposition a few days later in his own memorandum to the SANACC. A few days after that, the Secretary of the National Security Council forwarded to Secretary of Defense

James Forrestal “a very persuasive and accurate appraisal of the need for psychological warfare operations to counter Soviet-inspired Communist propaganda, particularly in France and Italy.” This memorandum was from Secretary of Commerce Averell Harriman, who from 1943 to 1946 had been Ambassador to the Soviet Union and then to Great Britain. While transmitting Harriman’s memorandum, the NSC Secretary took the opportunity to suggest some basic organizational principles to improve the U.S. Government’s psychological warfare capability: strengthen the State Department’s overt information activities; give the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) responsibility for covert activities, “since it already has contacts and communications with appropriate organizations and agents in foreign countries”; and appoint an interdepartmental board, chaired by the Department of State representative, with the military and CIA as members, to set policies for overt and covert information activities and to coordinate everything that the government does.<sup>59</sup>

This sequence of memos in late 1947 set in motion the process that restored psychological warfare or, more accurately, elevated it to importance as a component of America’s peacetime foreign policy. A consensus had formed that “the present world situation requires that the U.S. immediately . . . develop and utilize strong and concerted measures designed to produce psychological situations and effects favorable to the attainment of U.S. National objectives” and that these measures be both “white” and “black,” i.e., overt and covert.<sup>60</sup> In an interview in 1971, Harriman highlighted the perspective within which this consensus formed. In addition to his official positions, Harriman had a wide network of influential friends with whom he discussed foreign and domestic politics. According to Harriman,

It was very clear [in the immediate post-war period] that the whole of Europe would be weakened, and that communism—without [U.S. help]—would take over. I’m sure that was one of the reasons why Joseph Stalin broke his agreements, because the situation looked too good in Western Europe for a Communist takeover. I think Stalin was convinced he could move into Western Europe. He was undoubtedly told by leaders in the Communist Parties in Italy and France that their organizations were very strong; that with some help they would be able to take over Italy and France.<sup>61</sup>

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were two responses to the Soviet threat to Western Europe and by extension to the United States. Overt and covert psychological operations in peacetime, a significant departure from past practice, was another.

The perception of the external threat was critical in establishing the consensus in favor of psychological warfare in peacetime, but the external threat was not the only concern at the time among decisionmakers, nor was it decisive. Marshall, for example, was not part of the consensus in favor of psychological warfare. The Director of Central Intelligence told his staff on November 18, 1947, that Marshall "does not like the term 'PW' and does not seem to favor the idea of psychological warfare at this time."<sup>62</sup> In his oral history interview, Harriman said that Marshall was one of the last senior leaders of the government to recognize the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Following the failed Moscow conference in 1947, however, Marshall came to recognize the threat. Yet, he opposed psychological warfare. His opposition, or at least the State Department's, appears to have derived from sentiments similar to those then present in the military establishment. Psychological operations, especially covert psychological operations, should they come to light, were incompatible with diplomacy and therefore potentially damaging to the Department's efforts.

The NSC staff made psychological operations more palatable to the State Department by dividing the government's information activities in two parts, calling the overt component that accompanied U.S. foreign policy "foreign information activities" and referring to the covert component as psychological operations. Consequently, National Security Council Document 4 (NSC 4), "Report by the National Security Council on Coordination of Foreign Information Measures" (December 17, 1947), put the Secretary of State in charge of providing policy for and coordinating America's overseas information efforts.

NSC 4-A gave the CIA authority to carry out "covert psychological operations abroad." The CIA ultimately defined these operations as "all measures of information and persuasion short of physical in which the originating role of the U.S. Government will always be kept concealed." NSC 4-A granted this authority to the CIA subject to the approval of "a panel designated by the National Security

Council," which would include representatives from State, the Joint Staff, and the military services. This approval process was to make sure that the CIA carried out covert psychological operations "in a manner consistent with U.S. foreign policy, overt foreign information activities, and diplomatic and military operations and intentions abroad." <sup>63</sup>

The United States used its new peacetime psychological warfare capability in the months leading up to the Italian elections in April 1948. Those who knew of these operations judged them a success, with the Christian Democrats victorious, receiving 48 percent of the vote. This result contrasted sharply with events in Czechoslovakia, where the communists had complete control of the government by March 1948. George Kennan, the Director of the Department of State's Policy Planning Staff, was particularly impressed with what psychological operations had accomplished. He became a powerful voice inside the government for continuing and increasing what he termed "political warfare." Whereas in December 1947, he had argued that State "would wish to consider most carefully the need for" each psychological or covert operation before giving its consent, in the Spring of 1948, 1 month after the Italian election, he wrote a memorandum arguing in favor of establishing an organized political warfare capability so that in the future the U.S. Government would not have "to scramble into impromptu covert operations." In January 1949, he argued that the CIA was not doing enough and told Frank Wisner, who was running covert operations, that "every day makes more evident the importance of the role which will have to be played by covert operations if our national interests are to be adequately protected."

As he was arguing for the necessity of covert operations, Kennan was concerned about how they were organized. He argued, echoing the arguments that the British had engaged in a decade before, that State should have the lead in both overt and covert operations because they were political activities and State was in charge of all political activities overseas. Like others in the State Department, however, he believed that covert activities, if known, would undermine or compromise State's diplomatic efforts. He argued, therefore, that State should have authority over the operations but take no responsibility for them. The CIA argued that it should have

authority over all covert activities, although it acknowledged that it should take policy guidance from State and the military. The agencies involved continued to argue over these organizational issues into the early 1950s.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Military and Psychological Warfare.**

As the psychological warfare apparatus took shape in the U.S. Government, the military was at best a reluctant and hesitant participant. As the SANACC's planning effort for wartime psychological operations took place, the question of the Army's role in psychological warfare was broached with the appointment of retired World War II General Kenneth C. Royall as the Secretary of the Army in 1947. Royall was skeptical of psychological operations, as were a number of high-ranking officers and DoD civilians. Like other service Secretaries, Royall argued that the military should not be involved with psychological warfare, especially during peacetime, because it would involve the military in political matters outside its purview and competence. Royall and the other Secretaries also argued that the questionable morality of psychological warfare would adversely affect the image of the military if its participation in this activity became known.<sup>65</sup>

Two of Royall's deputies disagreed with him, however, and worked with like-minded officers, including Lieutenant General A. C. Wedemeyer, the Director of the Office of Plans and Operations, where the responsibility for psychological warfare then resided, to give the Army a psychological warfare capability. Wedemeyer's interest in this capability derived from his view that the conventional American approach to warfare was flawed. In his memoirs, published in 1958, Wedemeyer argued against slaughtering the enemy, which he called the standard American and British approach, as the only way to fight a war. Failing "to use political, economic, and psychological means in coordination with military operations" had prolonged World War II, he contended, and increased Allied casualties. One of Royall's deputies who worked with Wedemeyer was another World War II Army general, William H. Draper, whose responsibilities had included the occupied areas, where Army psychological operations



were continuing. The other official was Gordon Gray, who had only limited experience in the Army during the war. In an effort to change Royall's mind and preserve the Army's psychological warfare capability, Draper commissioned a study by a civilian consultant that described what the Army was already doing in psychological warfare. Apparently it helped persuade Royall that the Army should have some capability in this area, for he agreed in 1949, toward the end of his tenure, that the Army should establish a psychological warfare branch. Royall stipulated, however, that a civilian within the War Department should have ultimate responsibility for this activity. Wedemeyer was not happy with this arrangement, fearing that it would compromise the military chain of command, but he accepted it and psychological warfare found a precarious place in the Army.<sup>66</sup>

The situation was not much better in the other services. In 1949, only the Air Force had an office devoted to psychological warfare, which was supposed to develop plans and policies and consider logistical requirements. The Navy was in no better shape than the Army. Both services "apparently felt that psychological warfare, as a peacetime concern, was not sufficiently important to require continuous detailed staff consideration." The Joint Staff did establish a component to meet the support requirements that it felt would follow from the establishment of a covert capability in the CIA, but it otherwise dealt with psychological warfare issues by creating ad hoc groups, which meant that knowledge of the issues was ephemeral. Members of the Joint Strategic Plans Group (JSPG) expressed concern about this state of affairs, feeling that the Joint Staff's interests had not been represented adequately in the interagency discussions that led to a peacetime psychological warfare capability.

Part of the problem, according to the JSPG, was a fundamental difference in orientation between State and Defense. Defense believed in long-range planning, which State did not do because it felt that "political contingencies were so variable and intangible that long-range political plans were impracticable, if not impossible." This difference led to frustration and misunderstanding that no amount of staff structure would have overcome. But many of the Joint Staff's responsibilities could have been handled more effectively with more

staff. Proposals to augment staff to meet the full range of requirements associated with psychological warfare ran into objections from the services, however. In the words of the historian of the Psychological Strategy Board, "A year of wrangling" passed before the Joint Chiefs approved an organizational design.<sup>67</sup>

The difficult birth of a peacetime military psychological warfare capability is most apparent, however, in the Army, where the greatest responsibility lay. When Secretary of Army Royall consented to the Army having a psychological warfare capability in 1949, this did not lead immediately to tangible results. Royall's successor as Secretary of the Army was Gordon Gray, one of the subordinates who had worked to change Royall's views about psychological warfare. Now in a position to support this capability, Gray exerted pressure on the Army staff, as did Gray's successor, Frank Pace. Yet, in the summer of 1950, 15 months after Royall had first authorized a psychological warfare branch, the Army was still trying to identify the personnel spaces to fill it. The Army had no schooling underway in psychological warfare and only a handful of people qualified to conduct it. Pace's insistence that the Army staff get moving, along with the outbreak of the Korean War, finally led the Army to create in January 1951 the office that Royall had authorized originally. It was no longer a branch but a special staff office, the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare.<sup>68</sup>

The creation of the psychological warfare office did not resolve the Army's difficult relationship with this unconventional capability. In his meetings with the Chief of Staff, Secretary Pace continued to insist on the importance of psychological operations, calling them "the cheapest form of warfare." He inquired directly of General Matthew Ridgway in Korea about his ability to conduct such operations. Meanwhile, General Robert McClure, in charge of psychological warfare, warned his staff at their first meeting of the prejudice existing in the Army against their activity. It was not seen as the work of a true soldier. Because of this prejudice, career-conscious officers were reluctant to become involved with psychological warfare. During the war in Korea, McClure repeatedly complained, as Blankenhorn had during World War I, that the Air Force was not making sufficient aircraft available for leaflet drops

and had to deal with Army officers who did not see the value of psychological warfare. His efforts to assist the Far Eastern Command in establishing its psychological warfare office were blocked by the Army Staff's operations office. Some of these difficulties were the result of personality clashes and the aggressiveness with which the new Psychological Warfare office pursued its responsibilities, but "perhaps the major factor . . . was the belief of many staff officers that the relatively new fields of psychological and unconventional warfare were incidental activities that demanded an unjustified share of attention and resources in terms of their real value to the Army." Yet, despite all of these obstacles, by the early 1950s, the Army and the military in general had established the peacetime offices devoted to psychological operations that remain to this day permanent features of military organization and operations. In establishing these offices, the military paralleled innovations in civilian agencies that, taken together, gave the U.S. Government an unprecedented ability to wage psychological warfare in peacetime.<sup>69</sup>

Psychological operations received a place in the military establishment principally because of the efforts of civilians (Blankenhorn, McCloy, Pace, Gray, Jackson) and of soldiers like Eisenhower and Wedemeyer, who had the reputations of being political generals. The role of these operations was one, not surprisingly, that fit well with conventional military operations. The military wanted nothing to do with covert operations or with psychological operations understood as independent strategic activities, such as those employed in Europe after World War II. It was not so much the rising Soviet geopolitical threat that caused the Army to accept psychological operations as their possible utility in the Korean War in support of conventional operations.

The U.S. military was less enthusiastic than other elements of the U.S. Government about psychological operations because these operations did not fit its understanding of what military operations should be. Soldiers achieve victory by engaging the enemy, not by talking him to death, as we have seen one U.S. officer put it. Psychological operations were much more acceptable, therefore, when they supported engaging the enemy. Even then, not all military officers and civilian officials would accept them. These attitudes were

sensible as long as the enemy adhered to conventions about what militaries should do. When they ceased such adherence, however, these conventions became a vulnerability. This is what happened when the United States confronted an insurgency in Vietnam.

### **Counterinsurgency in Vietnam.**

To understand the American approach to counterinsurgency, we may consider two events centered on a hotel in Vietnam in 1964. Early that year, an Army study team gathered at the Brinks Hotel in Saigon, where U.S. officers were billeted, to devise a table of organization and equipment for a Vietnamese infantry company. U.S. forces were not deployed yet in South Vietnam, but the standard U.S. Army company was the model that the U.S. advisory and assistance effort was using to build South Vietnam's Army. These Army companies, however, were originally structured to fight in Germany. Recognizing that the South Vietnamese were not faring well against the Vietcong, the Army analyzed the problem. It carried out extensive research in the field, asking "operations research and systems analysis questions," and concluded that the war at that point was one of small fleeting engagements. As a result, the infantry company the study team devised was self-contained and more able than a standard U.S. Army company to operate independently of a battalion structure. As such, it was better suited than the U.S. Army's typical company to the small-unit war of scattered engagements then taking place in South Vietnam. According to one of the officers involved in the study, most of its recommendations eventually were adopted.<sup>70</sup>

Some months after the study team finished its work, two Vietcong detonated a car bomb in the parking area underneath the hotel where the team had worked. The explosion killed 2 Americans and injured 58. The Vietcong had conducted surveillance of the hotel, noting that South Vietnamese officers met Americans there. Buying South Vietnamese uniforms on the black market, the two Vietcong impersonated a South Vietnamese officer and his chauffeur looking for an American colleague. When told by staff that the American was no longer at the hotel, the "officer" insisted he was. He announced that he would drive himself home in his own car, leaving his chauffeur behind to wait for the American. Having been informed

by a Vietcong agent in the South Vietnamese government that the American had left the country, the South Vietnamese “officer” knew the American would not arrive and spoil his plan. The “chauffeur” was directed to wait in his car in the parking area under the hotel. The chauffeur parked the car and then informed a guard that he was going to get something to eat but would be right back. He watched the car explode from a nearby cafe.<sup>71</sup>

The meeting and the bombing at the Brinks Hotel suggest an important fact about the war in Vietnam that deserves attention from those interested in military innovation: contrary to the impression sometimes given, the U.S. Army did learn and innovate in Vietnam. It reorganized itself, deployed new technology, took on new tasks, and devised new tactics. The Army deployed a new air-mobile division to Vietnam and developed and refined air-mobile tactics with helicopters, an innovation that combined new tactics by a new organization using new technology, the epitome of the type of transformation that the U.S. military today hopes to create throughout its forces; it deployed night vision sensors; it developed and deployed communications technology that gave commanders unprecedented connectivity to echelons of command above and below and beside them. The result of these innovations was that “tactical operations in South Vietnam often bore little resemblance to those of the past.”<sup>72</sup> The Army also undertook activities in South Vietnam that bore little resemblance to conventional military operations. It ultimately assigned advisors to each of South Vietnam’s 236 districts and participated in a series of efforts to pacify the countryside, a learning process that culminated in the establishment of the Office of Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development (CORDS) in 1967. The Army also rewrote its doctrine. The 1962 version of *Field Manual 100-5, Operations*, the Army’s foundational doctrinal publication, contained a chapter on “Military Operations Against Irregular Forces,” absent from earlier editions of the manual. The chapter provides a sound counterinsurgency doctrine. The Army, then, did innovate during the War in Vietnam.<sup>73</sup>

The explosion at the Brinks Hotel, however, is only a small bit of evidence indicating that these innovations were essentially irrelevant. They were irrelevant because, like the plan to change the South Vietnamese Army devised at the Brinks hotel, they were based

on a conception of warfare that emphasized engaging and defeating enemy forces. But at this point in the long conflict, the enemy was not fighting that kind of war. The enemy was infiltrating government organizations and civil institutions and carrying out dramatic sneak attacks, like the bombing of the Brinks Hotel, that were insignificant for the conventional military balance but important for the political struggle that was the primary focus of the enemy.

It is important to note that during the long and complex fight in Vietnam, engaging enemy forces was sometimes, perhaps more often than not, the most important thing to do. For example, following the political crisis touched off by the demonstrations of the Buddhist priests, the Diem assassination, and the increasing effectiveness of Vietcong and North Vietnamese military activity (1964–65), engaging the enemy was not merely a military cultural preference. It was a necessary response to the enemy's activity and the political situation it created. There was no other way to stop the collapse of South Vietnam. The Army's operations stabilized the situation and might have led to victory if the political situation in Vietnam or in the United States had been more supportive.<sup>74</sup> Earlier in the war (1961–64), however, the Army had a freer hand in determining how it should respond to events in Vietnam than it did later. During the first years of American involvement in Vietnam, the situation was bad but not desperate. Nor was the enemy operating in large units. Yet, the Army at that stage pursued or, rather, trained and equipped the South Vietnamese Army to pursue, the same strategy – seek and engage the enemy – that it followed later in the war.

The Army's commitment to its customary way of doing things is evident in the history of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG). As part of efforts underway to increase the security of the South Vietnamese population, an Army officer working for the CIA came up with the idea of having U.S. forces train and advise Montagnards, tribal people living in the highlands of Vietnam. The purpose of the program was to get the Montagnards to stop the Vietcong from gaining control of their villages and tribal areas. In the fall of 1961, the Special Forces began training and supporting what came to be called CIDG. Run by the CIA, the program focused on village defense, although it included a strike force that the

program planners intended to use to protect the program's training center and to provide additional protection to any villages that the Vietcong might attack in force. In their support of CIDG, the Special Forces aimed at the insurgency's social-political center of gravity by winning the loyalty of the villagers. For example, they conducted medical assistance in the villages and included in the program other civil affairs activities, work with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and psychological operations.

In a process characteristic of much good innovative practice, the Special Forces experimented. Its official historian notes that, in the field, counterinsurgency was practiced and adjusted empirically with "many tactics attempted on a 'let's-try-it-and-see-what-happens' basis. If something worked, then it became an acceptable counterinsurgency tactic; if not, it was dropped."<sup>75</sup> Working in the CIA program, supported by the Agency's money and its flexible and militarily unorthodox supply system, the Special Forces had control of their resources (people, time, money) and the latitude and flexibility to develop their counterinsurgency practices. While not without problems, the program succeeded. After reviewing CIDG activities in Vietnam in early 1963, the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Special Warfare Activities reported that "the CIDG program holds the key to the attainment of the ultimate goal of a free, stable, and secure Vietnam. In no other way does it appear possible to win support of the tribal groups, strangle Vietcong remote area redoubts, and provide a reasonable basis for border patrol."<sup>76</sup>

The Army soon brought the autonomy of the Special Forces in the CIDG program to an end, however. As the program succeeded – with more villagers joining and the area under control of the South Vietnamese government increasing – the CIA requested more Special Forces. As the involvement of the Special Forces grew, it became more appropriate, at least in the eyes of the John F. Kennedy administration after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, for the military to run it. This is what apparently persuaded Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to have his department take charge of the program, a decision he reached following an inspection trip to Vietnam in May 1962.<sup>77</sup> This decision accorded with the views of the Army's leadership. They disliked having U.S. forces involved in operations

that did not fit their strategy of seeking the enemy and engaging him. They also disliked that the CIDG program allowed military forces to operate outside the control of the regular military command structure. McNamara's decision to bring the program under military control took care of these problems. With the end of the CIA's logistic responsibility for the program, all control passed to the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV). From that time on, the U.S. Army assumed complete responsibility for Special Forces activities in Vietnam.<sup>78</sup>

Once control of the CIDG program passed to the Army, operational control of Special Forces detachments was transferred to conventional military officers, who had little experience in counterinsurgency. Both the program and the missions of the Special Forces in Vietnam were reoriented to support the Army's conventional operations and strategy, leaving population protection to the South Vietnamese Army. Village defense became less important, for example, as the CIDG training camps were turned into bases for offensive strikes against Vietcong. With the Army's assumption of the South Vietnamese border surveillance and control mission in 1963, the responsibilities of the Special Forces shifted further away from pacification and population security operations to missions viewed by the military hierarchy as more aligned with conventional Army doctrine. "In such operations, CIDG forces were used as regular troops in activities for which they had not been intended, and in many cases, for which they had not been trained or equipped."<sup>79</sup> To address this problem, the Army began organizing the CIDG as a more conventional force. It established a standardized table of organization and equipment (TO&E) for a CIDG light guerrilla company in an attempt to "standardize" indigenous forces for better pursuit of the Vietcong. This was part of the plan devised at the Brinks Hotel and symbolically blown up there a few months later, epitomizing the irrelevance of Army innovation in Vietnam.<sup>80</sup>

The Army put an end to the CIDG for the same reason that later in the war it opposed the Marines' Combined Action Platoons (CAP), small numbers of Marines who, rather than chase down and engage the enemy, stayed in villages and helped villagers protect themselves.<sup>81</sup> Neither the CIDG nor the CAP fit the Army's conception



of warfare. We can gauge how strongly it held to its conception of warfighting if we recall the efforts made by the Kennedy administration to change the Army. The new administration believed, correctly, that the Army was not prepared to conduct counterinsurgency.<sup>82</sup> The administration set out to correct this problem by exerting pressure on the Army from the highest level. President Kennedy took a special interest in and pushed the development of counterinsurgency capabilities immediately after he took office, as part of his administration's new strategy of developing an array of responses to the Soviet threat. In a special address to Congress in May 1961, Kennedy discussed the problem of insurgency, as he did when he addressed the West Point graduating class in 1962. On this latter occasion, he spoke of the need for "a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force," to meet the threat of insurgency.<sup>83</sup>

Even before Kennedy's address to the West Point class, the administration was calling on DoD to improve its ability to counter insurgency. For example, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 2 (February 3, 1961), disseminated shortly after Kennedy took office, called on the DoD to put more emphasis on counter guerrilla forces; NSAM 56 (June 28, 1961) called on the Department to assess future requirements for unconventional warfare; NSAM 110 (October 25, 1961) urged the Department to use the results of the study requested in NSAM 56 to budget resources for unconventional conflict, even though the study was not complete, lest another year pass without improvement in U.S. preparations for unconventional warfare; NSAM 119 (December 18, 1961) called on the Pentagon to make use of civic action, i.e., the use of military forces "on projects useful to the populace at all levels," in the struggle against insurgency.<sup>84</sup>

The Kennedy administration also took steps to reorganize the executive branch in an effort to coordinate and integrate its counterinsurgent activities better and to make sure that the DoD was part of them. Its principal move in this direction was to set up in January 1962 the Special Group (Counterinsurgency), a collection of Cabinet-level officials from relevant agencies, including the DoD. This reorganization was part of the effort to encourage the DoD to take counterinsurgency seriously. NSAM-124, which set up the

Special Group, stated that the Group was designed to ensure that “subversive insurgency (‘wars of liberation’)” was recognized throughout the government as “a major form of politico-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare.” In particular, it stated that the function of the Group was “to insure that such recognition is reflected in the organization, training, equipment, and doctrine of the U.S. Armed forces.”<sup>85</sup> In addition to the Special Group, the Kennedy administration set up other interagency coordinating groups at lower levels in the government, on which the DoD also had seats.

More direct pressure was brought to bear on the military. Kennedy met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss counterinsurgency, and had a similar meeting with Army commanders, during which he suggested that promotions would depend on experience in counterinsurgency. Kennedy backed up this “hint” by arranging for Colonel William Yarborough, who was the commander of the Special Forces headquarters and had worked with the Philippine Scouts prior to World War II, to be promoted to brigadier general and then to major general. Kennedy also sent Secretary McNamara a memorandum informing him that he (Kennedy) was not satisfied with what the Department and the Army were doing with regard to guerrilla warfare, and that he wanted military personnel at all ranks educated in the requirements of counterinsurgency. High-ranking members of the Administration, including the Deputy National Security Advisor, carried the administration’s message directly to military personnel by making speeches to military audiences. Kennedy himself paid a visit to the headquarters of the Special Forces at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.<sup>86</sup>

The new administration not only exhorted the Army to develop the new mission of counterinsurgency and dangled the carrot of promotion as an incentive, it laid out in detail a comprehensive policy and strategy for responding to insurgency. NSAM-182 (August 24, 1962), titled “United States Overseas Internal Defense Policy,” represented insurgency as the result of communists hijacking the unrest created by modernization, that is, the profound socioeconomic changes sweeping the developing world. To prevent the communists from succeeding, the policy called for a counterinsurgency program

combining diplomatic, legal, social, economic, psychological, and military measures. It listed activities that each agency of the U.S. Government ought to undertake to support the policy. The first task listed for the DoD was to “develop U.S. military forces trained for employment in unconventional warfare and counter guerrilla and other military counterinsurgency operations.” There followed 15 other tasks for the Department, including developing equipment, doctrine, and research and development capabilities to support its counterinsurgency forces. The policy also instructed the Department to work with civilian agencies engaged in counterinsurgency and, in a reference to the Special Forces, to “develop language-trained and area-oriented U.S. forces for possible employment in training, or providing operational advice or operational support to indigenous security forces.”<sup>87</sup>

All of this effort by the civilians did cause the Army to make some changes. As we noted above, it rewrote its basic doctrine to include counterinsurgency, making the doctrine accord with the new “Overseas Internal Defense Policy.” In 1961, it established a new organization, the Fifth Special Forces Group, whose mission was counterinsurgency in Vietnam. The Army upgraded the Special Forces headquarters at Fort Bragg to the status of “Special Warfare Center.” It created the Office of the Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Special Warfare Activities in February 1962. The Army staff developed some innovative counterinsurgency ideas and a program to increase (again) the numbers of the Special Forces. Also in 1962, the Army opened a counterinsurgency school in Okinawa, Japan, and throughout this period expanded the courses on counterinsurgency taught at Fort Bragg for non-Special Forces Army personnel.<sup>88</sup> While these changes were not insignificant, they amounted to relatively little, given the priority and urgency the Kennedy administration had articulated. Most Army doctrine remained unchanged; other changes in the Army were superficial. Senior officers disparaged the administration’s emphasis on counterinsurgency.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, despite significant civilian pressure for the Army to take counterinsurgency seriously and despite promising potential, the two alternatives to its search-and-destroy missions—the CIDG early in the war, and CAP later on—the Army persisted in its preferred strategy. It refused to countenance an alternative that, by

protecting civilian populations, might have at least complemented its conventional efforts. Army Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland explained his opposition to CAP by arguing that he did not have the troops to put a squad in every village in imitation of the Marines. Yet, by one estimate, at the high point of the U.S. commitment, Westmoreland had enough troops to implement a CAP program and still have some divisions in reserve to handle larger-scale attacks. Even if we dispute the wisdom of such a diversion of Army assets—U.S. strategy called for South Vietnamese Regional and Popular Forces to provide local security (leaving U.S. units free to counter depredations by enemy mainforce units—a more compelling argument against Westmoreland’s claim that he did not have enough troops is that such a program did not have to be implemented everywhere all at once. It could have been done bit by bit, even as the Army kept searching for and destroying larger enemy units. The Marines ran their CAPs, by one estimate, with only 2.8 percent of the Marines in Vietnam. Thus Army resistance to the idea of imitating the Marine program was not only practical, it was cultural as well. Perhaps it would be better to say that because it had cultural overtones, it seemed practical. In any case, derogatory comments made by senior Army officers about the Marines’ CAP program, reminiscent of comments made about the Special Forces in the CIDG program, indicate that not only the effectiveness of the program, but its operational style was the issue for the Army.<sup>90</sup>

In extenuation of General Westmoreland and the Army, two things may be noted. First, alternatives to the strategy of attrition that Westmoreland followed were not self-evidently war winners.<sup>91</sup> Second, contrary to some claims, neither the Marines nor the CIA were particularly innovative in Vietnam. The CIA simply ran another paramilitary operation (CIDG), an action very much part of its usual repertoire. The population protection aspects of the program do not appear to have been the CIA’s contribution but an Army officer’s, as previously noted. The Marines did devote more time to the unconventional business of population security than the Army did and developed an innovative program (CAP) in Vietnam, but this resulted from the efforts and leadership of individuals, often junior officers but including Generals Lewis W. Walt and Victor Krulak. If

Walt and the others involved in these efforts had not been in place when they were, there is no guarantee that the Marines would have innovated in Vietnam. The Corps as an institution did not accept counterinsurgency as a mission, despite its long experience with improvisational operations in its role as a constabulary force prior to World War II. During the counterinsurgency era, the Corps, like the Army, remained devoted to its principal mission, in the case of the Corps, amphibious operations. The Marine general most closely identified with counterinsurgency, Krulak, was denied promotion to Commandant, the Corps' highest position, in part because of his association with this unconventional approach to conflict. Because counterinsurgency was their core mission, we might argue that not even the Special Forces innovated in Vietnam, at least not in doctrine, however much their attention to the local populations and their trial-and-error approach led to innovation or adaptation in counterinsurgency practice.<sup>92</sup>

The stout resistance throughout the military to civilian calls for more attention to counterinsurgency contrasts with the final acceptance and continued survival of psychological operations following World War II. The obvious reason why one innovation failed and the other succeeded, at least to some extent, is that psychological operations support conventional operations, whatever else they may do. In fact, such operations have found a home in the military to the extent that they support conventional operations. Counterinsurgency, with its emphasis on protecting populations rather than destroying the enemy, represented too much of a departure from conventional warfare. The Kennedy administration believed that insurgency was a new kind of warfare, "a major form of politico-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare." In a sense, the military as an institution could not be won over to such a concept.

Judgments about innovation in Vietnam and elsewhere need to be tempered of course by the recognition of their contingent nature. Innovation is a complex event, transformation even more so. Outcomes are far from certain. Vietnam illustrates this point. Apart possibly from the Special Forces, if we are to find innovation in the military in the counterinsurgency era, we need to look at individuals like Krulak. Indeed, if the Marine Corps' reputation for innovation in Vietnam properly rests on a few individuals, then one might argue

that the Army's reputation for lack of innovation rests on the same basis. As Lewis Sorley has noted, if President Lyndon Johnson had chosen one of the other candidates for the job that Westmoreland eventually got, the Army's operations in Vietnam might have taken a different direction.<sup>93</sup> The three other candidates all developed into critics of search-and-destroy. One of the three, Creighton Abrams, succeeded Westmoreland, and tried to make population security a more important part of the Army's efforts in Vietnam. If Johnson had chosen one of these three instead of Westmoreland, history might record that instead of innovating only organizationally, technologically, and doctrinally, the Army in Vietnam might have innovated strategically as well, possibly producing a better result.

## CONCLUSION

Defeat in Indochina and an ongoing threat in Algeria prompted the French to innovate in unconventional warfare. Military officers pushed the innovation; imitation of the Indochinese enemy and victorious allies guided it; civilians assisted it. Ultimately it failed. An external threat prompted American civilians to push the U.S. military to innovate with psychological operations and in counterinsurgency. The military resisted in both cases. Ultimately, it accepted psychological operations to the extent that they were in accord with the conventions of the military profession (e.g., nothing covert) and supported conventional operations. The military rejected counterinsurgency. A defeat in Indochina prompted the U.S. military to focus all the more strongly on conventional warfare.<sup>94</sup> External threats prompted the British, including civilians and military in almost equal measure, to adapt continually to a variety of unconventional threats, developing capabilities in both political warfare and counterinsurgency. This process of adaptation continues to the present. British peacekeeping following the end of the Cold War was arguably a further development of the British approach to counterinsurgency. The British also approached certain unconventional tasks in the Iraq War of 2003 differently from and arguably better than the Americans.<sup>95</sup> How do we explain these different responses to unconventional warfare?

## **Limitations to Innovation and Transformation.**

Material interests and interservice or intraservice rivalries do not explain much, if anything. As we noted in discussing the French case, narrow or self-serving bureaucratic, service, branch, or individual interests do not explain the support of French officers for revolutionary warfare. In the case of the United States, material self-interest also does not appear to be a good explanation for why the military treats unconventional warfare as unenthusiastically as it does. The U.S. military and its industrial suppliers and their supporters in Congress had and have a good deal invested in the continuation of conventional warfare. The military has consistently failed to “sell” unconventional warfare, even to administrations that were eager buyers. By itself, therefore, material self-interest does not explain the U.S. military’s support for the kind of warfare it prefers. If material self-interest were an explanation for military behavior, the military would have adapted to the demands of unconventional warfare more readily.

In all the cases we examined, external threats were an important, if not the most important, motivation for innovation. Such threats engage the institutional interests and professional concerns of military officers and those involved with national security. In the case of unconventional threats, however, military professionalism explains why certain militaries do not adapt readily. While the professionalism of the military makes the military attend to external threats, it also leads the military to see those threats through the lens of professional conventions. These conventions ultimately channel thinking and resources into conventional paths, toward M-1 tanks rather than Army Special Forces, toward carrier air wings rather than Navy SEALs, and toward F-16s rather than Combat Talons. Whatever the threat, conventional technology, organization, and doctrine tend to become the answer.<sup>96</sup> Even more so, the fundamental orientation of the military, which is to engage the enemy directly, does not change. Four years into the war on terrorism, reports surfaced that the Pentagon was rethinking its focus on conventional warfare. A high-ranking civilian official involved in this process explained what this meant: “When we’ve talked about precision warfare in the past, it’s been in terms of hitting a tank or an SUV from

15,000 feet in the air with a precision munition. In the future, the talk about precision gets down to the level of using individuals to go after individuals."<sup>97</sup> Transformation is about putting projectiles into targets ever more quickly and precisely, whether the target is a tank or a forehead. "Find, fix, finish" is the mantra for both conventional and unconventional warfare. In this view, the focus of the Special Operations Command on its direct action mission, the direct application of force to the killing or capturing of terrorists, despite all the lessons and analysis indicating its limitations, is evidence of the power of the conventional warfare paradigm. This convention remains the prevailing view in the DoD. The QDR *Report* defines the indirect approach as working by, with, or through other forces. It sees the difference between conventional and unconventional warfare, therefore, as one of means. The only example of this approach offered in the QDR is T. E. Lawrence's leadership of irregular forces (Bedouin tribesmen) against the Turks at Aqaba. In other words, according to the QDR *Report*, the indirect approach is getting *others* to take a direct approach. In both conventional and unconventional warfare, closing with and engaging an enemy force remains the objective.<sup>98</sup>

The one consistency in our historical and contemporary experience with unconventional warfare is that innovations in this area will not succeed if they challenge the fundamental sense of identity and the self-understanding of a military. The U.S. military innovated continuously in Vietnam to get better at engaging and killing the enemy, but could not do so to get better at or even to undertake protecting civilians. The French doctrine of revolutionary warfare called for a fundamental change in the nature of the French Army, one that made dealing with and protecting civilians a high, if not the highest, priority. This effort at innovation failed. The British Army, on the other hand, developed an adaptive style that allowed it to accommodate a role in unconventional conflict. Its experience in the 19th century as it professionalized was principally in colonial warfare against irregular forces. Both the British and the French had traditions of imperial policing, but only the British were able to convert their tradition into a useful method of dealing with insurgents. One important difference between the French and British experience was the view, held by many in France, that insurgency or



revolutionary warfare was a new kind of warfare that would supplant conventional warfare as the most applicable response to future threats to the French nation. This implied of course that the French Army had to change in a fundamental way and that civil-military relations had to change as well. These requirements amounted to too great a transformation in the French Army's understanding of itself for it to succeed. The British Army did not have to face the challenge of radical change. It therefore managed to adapt or at least to adapt better than its American and French colleagues. When it comes to innovating or transforming, at least for unconventional warfare, it is the self-understanding of a military that is critical and not, as various analyses of conventional military innovation argue, whether civilians intervene, or military mavericks take the lead, or the rivalry is within or between the Services.

Since September 11, 2001 (9/11), the unconventional threat has assumed a generally accepted importance it did not previously have. The past experience we have examined suggests, unfortunately, that the U.S. military will not innovate successfully to meet this threat. Current experience appears to confirm this. The report of the 9/11 Commission concluded that, confronted with the threat of al-Qai'da, the national security establishment could provide Presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush only a "narrow and unimaginative menu of options."<sup>99</sup> Two years into the war against terrorism, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, appearing quite doubtful on the matter, asked his senior advisers whether the Department had changed enough or could change enough to fight this unconventional threat. Four years into the war, Rumsfeld reportedly was dissatisfied with the U.S. Special Operations Command's response to the war.<sup>100</sup> Clearly, change has occurred in response to 9/11, but as the foregoing brief review suggests, it has come slowly or not at all in many cases.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, one might wonder how far-reaching or enduring any change will prove. The QDR and other DoD documents state that irregular warfare and stability operations enjoy as high a priority as combat operations,<sup>102</sup> but the Kennedy administration, to no enduring effect as we have seen, once declared counterinsurgency to be the equivalent of combat operations. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Secretary Rumsfeld's rhetoric was eerily reminiscent of the words spoken about so-called "wars of national liberation" by Kennedy at

West Point in 1962. At military schools today, counterinsurgency is a hot topic, much as it was for a few years in the early 1960s.<sup>103</sup>

### **Implications for Policy and Strategy.**

Past and present experience suggests that the U.S. military will continue to innovate within its understanding of what warfare is, and that these innovations will doubtless aggregate into some sort of transformation of conventional warfare capability, but these innovations and the transformation they drive will be largely irrelevant to unconventional conflict. In simple terms, the U.S. military will get better and better at putting projectiles into targets, whether bullets into foreheads or missiles into tanks, but this skill will not be decisive in unconventional conflict. If this limitation in the capability of the military to transform itself is permanent, it would mean that DoD, to answer Secretary Rumsfeld's question to his advisors, will not be able to change enough to prevail in the fight against jihadism. This suggests, in turn, that DoD should not have as prominent a role in this fight as it has had so far. If we accept this conclusion, we face a series of difficult questions. Which agency or department could replace DoD? If none could, would some sort of interagency organization work, or should DoD retain the lead but establish a new DoD organization devoted to unconventional warfare? If a new interagency organization develops, should DoD still establish a new organization devoted to unconventional warfare so that it will be able to make relevant contributions to the interagency effort?

Before considering such questions, we should examine the assumption that gives rise to them, i.e., that the current conventions about warfare that govern DoD's conduct will not change. If this assumption is wrong, then DoD might alter itself so that it could better deal with unconventional threats, making a new interagency or DoD unconventional warfare organization unnecessary. Throughout the long history of humans warring on each other, the accepted notion of what warfare is has seen considerable change.<sup>104</sup> Might it not continue to do so? To answer this question in turn, we begin by briefly considering how the current warfighting convention came to be.

What we know today as conventional warfare is the result of centuries of technological, socio-economic, and political change. The self-understanding of the U.S. military as a professional organization matured in the latter stages of these developments, mediated by a specific institutional (presidential) and geostrategic (isolated, internally focused) setting and also affected by the long-term interplay of various civilian, military, political, and bureaucratic interests. In the latter part of the 19th century, the U.S. military, particularly the Army, became a professional force when it faced no serious external enemies. Consequently, politicians left the Army alone. It became the Army's understanding that it should be left alone to perfect the military art as it understood that art. The hold of this formative period on the U.S. Army remains powerful. Some present-day "cavalry" units wear spurs; the Army's Blue dress uniform resembles a 19th-century cavalry officer's. When President George W. Bush spoke at the Citadel shortly after the U.S. military had swept the Taliban from power, the remark that received the biggest ovation from the cadets was his description of U.S. military forces as having led the first cavalry charge of the 21st century.<sup>105</sup>

As the United States came to need a larger Army in the 20th century, the country's presidential system and its doctrine of the separation of powers helped protect the Army and the other services from civilian intervention. Whether or not Congress was in the hands of a party different from the President's, representatives and senators had motives to oppose the President's military initiatives. For example, the level of military spending in a congressional district or state matters to a representative or senator regardless of who is in the White House. The military serves two masters, with each having different, often competing interests. This weakens the control of either master, helping insulate the military from outside influence. It allows the services to define themselves as devoted to defending the nation from what threatens it, as those threats are understood through the military art and the conventions of the military profession, not in response to the changing demands of politicians.

To the question of whether current U.S. military conventions about warfighting might change, the first answer we reach is that they are unlikely to do so in the short term or as a result of civilian

intervention. The U.S. military's formative experiences have made it resistant to such pressure. Moreover, the direct levers on the military that a President or Secretary of Defense holds and which are often cited as levers to prompt innovation – budgeting, promotions, force structure, etc. – are subject to review by Congress and comment by journalists and interest groups. This means that intervention by the President or the Secretary of Defense carries political risks. Donald Rumsfeld's fights with the services and Congress over the direction of the military threatened his job before 9/11.<sup>106</sup> Given the military's institutional commitment to what it does and has always done, it also is unlikely that replacing generals will do much good. It might allow us to win a campaign that we would otherwise lose, but it will not change the way the institution thinks.<sup>107</sup> That thinking, and the now habitual or conventional way of responding to the world, have been and remain relatively impervious to the manipulation of interests.

To this argument about the futility of civilian intervention, one might respond that civilians simply have not tried hard enough. Yet, even if one were willing to pay the political costs of massive civilian intervention in the personnel and budgetary work of the military in order to promote transformation against unconventional threats, two objections to doing so would arise. First, civilian intervention might decrease our security from external threats. This would occur if such intervention made the military too attentive to domestic political pressure and not attentive enough to changing threats in the security environment, particularly when those threats run counter to the prejudices of domestic politics. Second, civilian intervention might increase our vulnerability to internal threats. Political intervention strong enough to change the military could well undermine the military's political independence, which might both transform America's civil-military relations in a deleterious way and undermine the professionalism of America's military. This consequence need not reach the degree of civil-military turmoil that the French suffered as a consequence of defeat in Indochina and Algeria to be a development that the United States should try to avoid.

## In the Short Term.

The character of the U.S. military and the institutional setting in which it operates suggest that, in the short term, it will be difficult to change the self-understanding of the military so that it is better able to deal with unconventional conflict. Faced with this conclusion, we return to the set of questions we previously asked concerning what substitute for DoD's lead role in the struggle against jihadism might exist. Three answers or some combination of them seem possible. DoD can retain the lead in the struggle against jihadism, and we can continue to muddle through; or we can transfer as much responsibility as possible for the struggle from DoD to another agency or agencies; or we can create a new organization within DoD from those components which have experience with unconventional warfare. Each of these responses has virtues; none is completely satisfactory.

Muddling through may not make things worse, at least in the short term, but it would not improve them either. Innovation to meet the unconventional threat would continue as it always has at the point of contact with the enemy, but, given the inertia of the warfare convention, such innovations would have limited effect and staying power.<sup>108</sup> Even if the military devotes more resources to unconventional or irregular warfare, it is likely to continue to treat unconventional warfare as a lesser-included case, despite current rhetoric to the contrary. Inconveniently, the history we have examined suggests that unconventional warfare is different fundamentally from conventional warfare. It is a *different* case, and not a lesser-included case, vis-à-vis conventional warfare. As we have noted, British officers began reporting this development in the 1920s, as changing political ideas and new technologies combined to limit the power of Europeans to impose their will in their colonies.<sup>109</sup> Thus, the development of unconventional warfare is a kind of revolution in military affairs. "Muddling through" as a response to such a revolution will probably be an inadequate response over the longer term.<sup>110</sup>

As an alternative to merely muddling through, we might transfer responsibility for the unconventional response from DoD. This would help insulate the struggle from the conventional approach

that is inappropriate for it. It would move the emphasis of our response back toward police and intelligence work, which is most appropriate, restricting DoD to that limited aspect of the fight against jihadism marked by an interface with nation-states and their forces. One might object that DoD must remain in charge precisely because dealing with the nation-states that support terrorism is critical to our success against jihadism. This view, itself a reflection of conventional prejudices, seems largely unfounded. Although helpful, nation-state support is not critical for terrorists. Jihadism has not abated, certainly not operationally, since it was deprived of control of Afghanistan. In any event, stronger and less arguable objections to this alternative exist. We have no police force capable of taking charge of a global struggle and no likely candidate for such a role. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is consumed with transforming itself to deal with the internal threat from terrorism, and should not be burdened with an additional and very difficult duty. The CIA's operational capability is global and its role critical, but its clandestine character is incompatible with the public and political character that leadership in the struggle against jihadism requires. More important, no matter which agency was in charge (for example, the State Department), it would tend to let its own perspective dominate what should be an integrated interagency effort. An interagency organization would be best, then, but it would need to be one unlike any that has so far existed and certainly altogether different from the still-born Low-Intensity Conflict Board within the NSC mandated by the same legislation that established the Special Operations Command.<sup>111</sup>

Shifting leadership from DoD to a new interagency organization would leave DoD's capability unreformed and unable to contribute as required. The history and analysis we have presented suggest that improving DoD's capability will require establishing an organization within DoD devoted to unconventional warfare.<sup>112</sup> The argument for this new organization is the same as the one used to support the establishment of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Just as it was unlikely that special operations forces could flourish within conventional military organizations, so is it unlikely that an unconventional warfare capability can flourish in a department that has become dominated by the direct approach to carrying

out its responsibilities. Yet, setting up an effective unconventional warfare organization within DoD would be difficult, certainly more difficult than setting up SOCOM. SOF's direct action mission fits more easily into the warfare convention than does the indirect approach of unconventional warfare. Playing on this similarity between direct action and conventional warfare was one of the ways that early proponents of an improved special operations capability used to sell the Army on this idea.<sup>113</sup> Proponents of an improved unconventional warfare capability will not have that advantage. Given DoD's warfighting culture, if such an organization comes into being, it is likely always to lead a precarious existence.<sup>114</sup> Committed civilian leaders, including legislators, and military officers would have a hard time preventing such an organization from being either overwhelmed or worn down by the inertia of the conventional. Yet, such a separate organization remains probably the best hope for an effective unconventional warfare capability in DoD.

### **In the Long Term.**

Our analysis to this point leads to the conclusion that the best bet to improve the U.S. Government's capacity to wage unconventional warfare in the short term is a new, untried interagency organization and a separate unconventional warfare organization in DoD that will have difficulty thriving. Might a longer-term perspective change the analysis and the recommendations that flow from it? At first glance, the prospects for DoD changing to meet the unconventional threat over the long term look good. The institutional setting that helps insulate the services from political pressure to transform (our presidential system) is not likely to change (the United States is not likely to adopt a parliamentary system), but the geo-strategic setting that affects the professional understanding of the military already has. Since World War II, the United States has emerged from its insular, isolationist shell, employing its power and military forces overseas repeatedly. For most of this postwar period, the United States faced a significant conventional threat in the Soviet Union. This allowed the military to discount the unconventional threat. More fairly, given limited budgets, time, and human capacity, the existence of the conventional

threat, which was by far the most important, required the military to treat the unconventional threat as a lesser-included case of the greater threat. Over the coming decades, if we continue to encounter unconventional threats without facing a powerful conventional threat, then the U.S. military, as a professional force attentive to external threats, should adapt institutionally to these unconventional threats. After all, some change in the military's outlook was occurring in the 1990s after the Soviet Union collapsed and the U.S. military faced a series of unconventional threats and operational challenges.<sup>115</sup> The attacks on 9/11 prevented further change, one might argue, only because the Bush administration responded to them by fighting the war on terrorism in large measure as either a struggle between states or a matter of killing or capturing enemies. This approach returned conventional warfare to prominence and stopped the military's adaptation to unconventional warfare. The Bush administration even has given the one organization in the military supposedly devoted to unconventional warfare, the Special Operations Command, the conventional task of target acquisition and destruction. If over the longer term, this conventional approach to the unconventional problem of jihadism fails, then future administrations and the U.S. military – guided by its professional devotion to the defense of the United States – are likely to change to meet the unconventional threat.

This change to meet the unconventional threat over the long term will be unlikely to occur, however, if a conventional threat arises comparable to the one posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In that case, the military's professional concern is likely to focus on that conventional threat, since it will reinforce established patterns of thought and action. A critical point, then, in assessing long-term prospects for DoD adapting to unconventional warfare is the development of our strategic situation with China. China appears to be the one country that, in the the future, could pose a conventional threat sufficient to eclipse the unconventional threat. If it does, then the U.S. military, once again, is likely to treat unconventional warfare as a lesser-included case of conventional warfare.

If it is true that the future status of unconventional warfare depends on what happens with China, then it will be difficult to predict. But as Dr. Stephen Biddle has argued incisively,<sup>116</sup> what



happens with China is not entirely beyond our influence. An emphasis by the United States in its conflict with jihadism on the unilateral use of conventional military force, especially focused on other nations or their forces, even in the name of democratization, is likely to encourage great power competition and, hence, the rise of China as a conventional threat to the United States. A unilateral conventional approach by the United States is likely to increase such competition in the future because it will appear threatening to other nations and spur their efforts to counter American power. Fighting jihadism in a multilateral manner, on the other hand, emphasizing cooperative efforts in human intelligence and policing, is likely to retard the rise of great power competition and, hence, the rise of China as a conventional threat to the United States. In brief, our inability to understand and use an unconventional approach to jihadism today is likely to promote the rise of China as a great power competitor tomorrow and to that extent to discourage adaptation to unconventional threats in the future.

We might not need to worry about our failure to adapt to unconventional threats, and hence the more rapid rise of a great power rival, if we maintain a comparative advantage in conventional warfare. This advantage would allow us to contend with the rival on terms that would be best for us. This assumes, however, that the unconventional threat, while remaining fundamentally different from the conventional threat, will not pose as great a danger to us as the conventional threat. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Terrorist acquisition of an enormously lethal chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapon is already an unconventional threat that rivals any conventional threat. Another unconventional threat that might rise to the level of the conventional threats we are accustomed to would be the political success of the jihadist insurgency within Islam. If jihadists came to control one or more strategically important (oil, nuclear weapons) Islamic country, that might shift the balance of power in the world against the United States as decisively as the rise to preeminence of China. At the moment, this threat is less real than the threat of terrorist acquisition of CBRN weapons, but may become more real over time if we continue to respond in a largely conventional fashion to the jihadist insurgency.

A long-term perspective toward our ability to adapt to unconventional threats suggests a competition for our attention, so to speak, between conventional and unconventional threats.<sup>117</sup> Which threat wins the competition for our attention is not entirely in our control, as we have seen, but we can affect the competition. To repeat, we may be able to retard the emergence of a great power competitor in the future if we improve now the effectiveness of our unconventional response to jihadism and make it the centerpiece of our efforts. In doing so, we would remove an incentive for great power competition, as noted above. Improving our unconventional warfare capability now also makes sense as the best way to deal with unconventional threats that are likely to increase. Taking measures to deal with unconventional threats now, therefore, will improve our security in the short term and, by possibly reducing great power competition in the long term, make us more secure in the future.

## RECOMMENDATION

Our analysis of the long-term prospects for adaptation to unconventional threats has concluded that short-term adaptation is the best way to deal with the long-term issues. Our analysis of the short-term prospect for adaptation has concluded that the most promising steps are to establish two new organizations – a new kind of interagency organization devoted to unconventional warfare, and an unconventional warfare organization within DoD. If we give these innovative organizations a central role in our response to jihadism, we will not only increase our security now, but in the long term as well by forestalling the rise of a great power competitor. If the very idea of great powers and great power competition is fading and along with it the importance or even the existence of conventional warfare,<sup>118</sup> then these innovative organizations for unconventional warfare will be the beginning of a truly revolutionary transformation of our warfighting capability.

Adaptation to unconventional threats in the short term will be difficult because those threats are not yet deemed serious enough to overwhelm the conventional orientation of the U.S. military and U.S. Government. In these circumstances, using shorter-term incentives (control of budgets, promotions, etc.) to reinforce the longer-term

incentives provided by the changing strategic setting might encourage the process of adjustment to unconventional warfare. The history we have examined suggests that, in any event, the adjustment is likely to be slow, intermittent, and stumbling, with rapid change proving superficial and substantial change emerging bit by bit, if at all. It also suggests that for the U.S. military, the adjustment is most likely to come, if it comes, from the inside, by relying on the professionalism of the military. Unlike encouragement with incentives, direct civilian intervention is unlikely to work, especially if it insists that a transformation of the military – a fundamental change in how the military thinks about war and itself – is necessary.<sup>119</sup>

Implicit in the analysis we have offered is the assumption that the military cannot focus at the same time on both conventional and unconventional warfare, that one or the other inevitably will suffer. Good infantrymen can do many things well, but in relying only on them and good infantry thinking, the best we are likely to manage in unconventional warfare is muddling along. The requirements for each kind of warfare are distinct and rarely complementary. The issue here is not so much budgetary (our unconventional warfare capability should be low-tech, for example)<sup>120</sup> as it is cultural. The two kinds of warfare require two different ways of thinking and evaluating. There is no reason to believe that any organization or the people within it will be equally good at both. We are entering a period when, because of socio-economic and technological developments, the claim of the Kennedy administration – that unconventional warfare is “a major form of politico-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare” – is indeed coming true. It is therefore appropriate to develop new organizations to deal with this kind of conflict, much as we developed new organizations to deal with the Cold War. Establishing these new organizations would in effect acknowledge that the changes proposed by the Kennedy administration were the first halting efforts to deal with a true revolution in military affairs. But again, to grant the possibility that unconventional warfare has become a potent force does not require us to go to the extreme of arguing that the age of the nation-state and its distinctive style of warfare is over. It requires only that we recognize, which has been less of a problem since 9/11, that nonstate forces pose a serious threat that deserves a response different from but certainly as serious as the

response the DoD is making to the apparent revolution in military affairs in conventional warfare.

## ENDNOTES

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64. "Department of State Briefing Memorandum," December 17, 1947, FRUS, Document 256; "Policy Planning Staff Memorandum" May 4, 1948, FRUS Document 269; Memorandum From the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, Kennan, to the Assistant Director for Policy Coordination, Central Intelligence Agency, Wisner," January 6, 1949, FRUS Document 308; "Memorandum From the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Kennan, to the Under Secretary of State, Lovett," October 29, 1948, FRUS Document 305; "Psychological and Political Warfare," FRUS Introduction; Mitrovich, *Undermining the Kremlin*, pp. 16-18.

65. "Memorandum for the President of Discussion at the 12th Meeting of the National Security Council," June 3, 1948, FRUS Document 283; "Memorandum for the President of Discussion at the 13th Meeting of the National Security Council," June 27, 1948, FRUS Document 291; Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, pp. 43-45, 48.

66. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, pp. 57-60, 64; General Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958, pp. 91, 95.

67. Lilly, "Short History of the Psychological Strategy Board," p. 62-64, 75-76, 78-79.

68. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, pp. 61, 63, 91-94; Lilly, "Short History of the Psychological Strategy Board," p. 86.
69. Paddock, *U.S. Army Special Warfare*, pp. 97, 94, cf. p. 147, 100-101, 118, 102-103, 107.
70. John A. Nagl, "British and American Army Counterinsurgency Learning during the Malayan Emergency and the Vietnam War," Ph.D. Dissertation, Oxford: University of Oxford, 1997, pp. 185-186.
71. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam, A History*, New York: The Viking Press, 1983, pp. 408-409.
72. Robert A. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*, 1979; Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, and Washington, DC: The Center for Military History, 2001, p. 30.
73. The argument for noninnovation in Vietnam focuses principally on doctrine, where this argument is most true. See, for example, Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. Krepinevich, p. 39, however, misrepresents the quality of the discussion of counterinsurgency doctrine in *FM 100-5*, 1962. For innovation in Vietnam, see Lieutenant General John Hay, Jr., *Vietnam Studies, Tactical and Materiel Innovations*, Washington, DC, 1974. Peter M. Dawkins, "The United States Army and the 'Other' War in Vietnam, A Study of the Complexity of Implementing Organizational Change," Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton: Princeton University, February 1979, provides a detailed discussion of the Army's involvement in the advisory program.
74. Jeffrey Record, "Vietnam in Retrospect: Could We have Won?" *Parameters*, Winter, 1996-97, pp. 51-65, summarizes the views of those who believe that the Army's strategy could have worked.
75. Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973, p. 10.
76. Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War, U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia, 1956-1975*, Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1985, pp. 38-39; Letter, DA Office of the Chief of Staff, Subj: Special Warfare Field Visit to Vietnam and Okinawa, 13-30 Jan 63, dated January 30, 1963, p. 3, quoted in "Outline History of the 5th SF Group, Airborne, Participation in the CIDG Program, 1961-1970," p. 11, [www.ehistory.com/vietnam/pdf/sfcidg.pdf](http://www.ehistory.com/vietnam/pdf/sfcidg.pdf), accessed October 1, 2002. See also Thomas K. Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action: The Challenge of Unconventional Warfare*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998, p. 85; Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 70-71; Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, pp. 4, 19-44. On the problems in the CIDG program, see, for example, General William B. Rosson (USA, ret.), "Four Periods of American Involvement in Vietnam: Development and Implementation of Policy, Strategy, and Programs, Described and Analyzed on the Basis of Service Experience at Progressively Senior levels," Ph.D. Dissertation, Oxford University, 1979, p. 124.
77. Rosson, "Four Periods of American Involvement in Vietnam," pp. 149-151.

78. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 72–74.

79. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, p. 49.

80. *Ibid.*, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, pp. 34; 46–48; Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 73–75. I have not uncovered any documentary evidence that the work done at the Brinks Hotel was the basis for the CIDG table of organization and equipment, but the timing is right and the CIDG table is similar to what the Army study team developed. Compare Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, p. 48; and Nagl, “British and American Army Counterinsurgency Learning,” pp. 185–186.

81. On the Marines and counterinsurgency, their operations in Vietnam and the CAPs, see Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 172–177; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis, The History of the United States Marine Corps*, New York: The Free Press, 1980; revised and expanded ed., 1991, pp. 548–549, 570–572, 589–590; Keith F. Kopets, “The Combined Action Program: Vietnam,” *Military Review*, Vol. 82, July–August, 2002, pp. 78–81; T. P. Schwartz, “The Combined Action Program: A Different Perspective,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 83, February, 1999, pp. 63–72; and General Lewis W. Walt, U.S. Marine Corps, *Strange War, Strange Strategy, A General’s Report on Vietnam*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1970, pp. 81–84.

82. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine*, p. 25.

83. John F. Kennedy, “Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy, June 6, 1962,” p. 226.

84. The NSAMs are available at [www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/nsam.htm](http://www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/nsam.htm), accessed September 19, 2002.

85. [www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/images/nsam124a.jpg](http://www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/images/nsam124a.jpg), accessed September 19, 2002.

86. Lloyd Norman and John B. Spore, “Big Push in Guerrilla Warfare,” *Army*, Vol. 12, March, 1962, p. 33; Adams, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in Action*, p. 68; Krepinevich, *The Army in Vietnam*, pp. 30–33; Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present*, New York: Free Press, 1977, p. 65; Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation, The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967, pp. 415, 424; Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, pp. 5–6.

87. For NSAM 183, see [www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/images/nsam182a.jpg](http://www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/images/nsam182a.jpg), accessed September 20, 2002; “United States Overseas Internal Defense Policy,” September 1962, declassified copy in possession of author, pp. 28–29.

88. Rosson, “Four Periods of American Involvement in Vietnam,” pp. 98, 109–110, 113–115; Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, p. 76.

89. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 30, 36–37, 43–44.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 174–177; Kopets, “The Combined Action Program.”

91. For comments on the effectiveness of attrition and criticisms of alternatives to it, see Scott Sigmund Gartner, *Strategic Assessment in War*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, pp. 133–137; Doughty, *The Evolution of U.S. Army*

*Tactical Doctrine*, p. 39; James J. Wirtz, "Intelligence to Please? The Order of Battle Controversy during the Vietnam War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, Summer, 1991, 239-263, especially p. 245; Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, and Robert K. Brigham, with Thomas J. Biersteker and Colonel Herbert Y. Schandler (U.S. Army, Ret.), *Argument without End, In Search of Answers to the Vietnam Tragedy*, New York: Public Affairs, 1999, pp. 313-371, especially pp. 348-362, 409-419; Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 167, 178, 190, 255-256; Walt, *Strange War, Strange Strategy*, p. 105; Schwartz, "The Combined Action Program: A Different Perspective," pp. 63-72. Millett is less enthusiastic about the CAP effort than Krepinevich. He also claims, contrary to Krepinevich, that Marines in CAPs suffered higher casualties than Marines in other units. Compare Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, p. 174; and Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, pp. 590. See also, Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, p. 602.

92. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*, argues that the Marines and the CIA innovated in Vietnam; Rosson, "Four Periods of American Involvement in Vietnam," p. 124; Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, p. 10; Stanton, *Green Berets at War*, pp. 38-43; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, pp. 570-572, 548-549, 582-583, 602; Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 172-174, 232; Lewis Sorley, *A Better War, The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999, p. 1.

93. Sorley, *A Better War*, p. 1.

94. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine*, p. 40-42.

95. Thomas R. Mockaitis, *Peace Operations and Intrastate Conflict: The Sword or the Olive Branch?* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999; John Keegan, *The Iraq War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, pp. 175, 182, 193, 209.

96. Thomas R. Searle, "Making Airpower Effective against Guerrillas," *Air & Space Power Journal*, Vol. 18, Fall 2004, pp. 13-23.

97. Bradley Graham, "Pentagon Prepares to Rethink Focus on Conventional Warfare; New Emphasis on Insurgencies and Terrorism Is Planned," *Washington Post*, January 26, 2005, p. A2.

98. Gordon Lubold, "Rumsfeld Leads Talks on Reshaping DoD," *Army Times*, January 23, 2006, p. 12, vi, 11.

99. *The 9/11 Commission Report, The Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004, p. 350.

100. "Rumsfeld's war-on-terror memo," October 16, 2003, [www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/executive/rumsfeld-memo.htm) accessed October 8, 2004; Bradley Graham, "Shortfalls of Special Operations Command Are Cited," *Washington Post*, November 17, 2005, p. A2.

101. For example, DoD does not acknowledge that it faces a global insurgency. R. R. Keene, "In a Historic Move, the Corps to Stand Up a Special Ops Command," *Leatherneck*, Vol. 88, December, 2005, pp. 46-47; Dana Milbank, "Rumsfeld's War on

'Insurgents,'" *Washington Post*, November 30, 2005, p. A4. Brigadier General Robert L. Caslen, the Joint Staff's Deputy Director for the Global War on Terrorism, recently remarked that "we do not go as far as to say it is a global insurgency because it lacks a centralized command and control." Quoted in Sharon Behn, "Terrorist Growth Overtakes U.S. Efforts, Pentagon Deputy Warns of Decades-long War," *Washington Times*, March 2, 2006, p. 13.

102. Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction, SSTR, Operations," November 28, 2005; News Briefing with Principal Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry and Director, Force Structure, Resources and Assessment, Joint Staff Vice Adm. Evan Chanik, February 3, 2006, [www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060203-12424.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060203-12424.html), accessed February 13, 2006. Henry: "... before we'd always said major combat operations, everything else was a lesser included subset. But now we're saying that we have two co-equal type of activities that we do operationally."

103. Thomas E. Ricks, "Lessons Learned in Iraq Show Up in Army Classes," *Washington Post*, January 21, 2006, p. A1; Lloyd Norman and John B. Spore, "Big Push in Guerrilla Warfare," *Army*, March 1962, p. 33; "DoD News Briefing," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, September 20, 2001, [www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2001/t09202001\\_t920ruma.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2001/t09202001_t920ruma.html), accessed January 30, 2006; John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at West Point to the Graduating Class of the U.S. Military Academy, June 6, 1962," *The Public Papers of the Presidents, John F. Kennedy, 1962*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977, p. 226.

104. John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2003.

105. The argument in this paragraph and the next borrows from Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*; and Jerry M. Cooper, "The Army's Search for a Mission, 1865-1890," in *Against All Enemies: Interpretations of American Military History from Colonial Times to the Present*, Kenneth J. Hagan and William R. Roberts, eds., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986. On the connection between attachment to the cavalry and problems of innovation and transformation, see Edward L. Katzenbach, "The Horse Cavalry in the Twentieth Century: A Study in Policy Response," in *American Defense Policy*, John E. Endicott and Roy W. Stafford, Jr., eds., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

106. Al Kamen, "Donny, We Hardly Knew Ye," *Washington Post*, September 7, 2001, p. A27; and Richard Lowry, "Bombing at the Pentagon," *National Review*, Vol. 53, Issue 17, September 3, 2001, p. 36.

107. Secretary Rumsfeld is now conducting an experiment to test this point, having recalled General Peter J. Schoomaker from retirement to serve as Chief of Staff of the Army in an apparent effort to speed up the transformation of the Army.

108. As Matthew G. Karres and Michael Richardson report,

a review of cases that span a century of US irregular warfare operations provides evidence that, at times, the military hierarchy did allow

subordinates to innovate and did listen to their recommendations, with positive outcomes as a result. This evidence also illustrates, however, that the military has failed to institutionalize these lessons and is prone to have to relearn them from conflict to conflict, and at times this relearning process has resulted in the failure of an operation.

Matthew G. Karres and Michael Richardson, *Innovation from Below: the Role of Subordinate Feedback in Irregular Warfare Operations*, Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2001.

109. Major C. B. Denning, "Modern Problems of Guerrilla Warfare," *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, Vol. 13, 1927.

110. For unconventional warfare as a revolution in military affairs, see David Tucker, "The War on Terrorism and the Western Way of Warfare," in *The West at War*, Bradley C. S. Watson, ed., Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, forthcoming, 2006. Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Summer 2001, pp. 93–128, documents and explains the increasing success in the 20th-century of the weak against the strong.

111. For an argument for and a description of an effective interagency organization, see David Tucker and Christopher J. Lamb, "Restructuring Special Operations Forces for Emerging Threats," *Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, January 2006.

112. *Ibid.*

113. "Interview with General E. C. Meyer" by Dr. J. W. Partin, Arlington, VA, July 14, 1988, p. 2, copy in author's possession.

114. "Precarious" is how Susan Marquis describes the existence of Special Operations Forces prior to the establishment of the Special Operations Command. See Susan Marquis, *Unconventional Warfare: Rebuilding U.S. Special Operations Forces*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997.

115. General Henry Shelton, "Peace Operations: The Forces Required," *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 6, Summer 2000, shows the "lesser-included case" assumption weakening, at least verbally.

116. Stephen Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, April 2005, [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=603](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=603), accessed May 3, 2006.

117. This discussion of long-term trends assumes that the distinction between conventional and unconventional warfare will remain in the future. This may not be a safe assumption, since, as noted in the introduction, this distinction—unconventional warfare deliberately targets civilians, conventional warfare does not—has eroded in the 20th century. If the distinction disappears or as it disappears, we should expect the U.S. military to adapt, since in this case conventional and

unconventional threats to the United States will no longer compete for the attention of the military. There simply will be one threat. In this case, attacks on American noncombatants would occur not as an “asymmetric strategy” pursued by an enemy who despaired of competing with our conventional forces. (For example, see Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999, translated by the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, [www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf](http://www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf), accessed May 10, 2006.) Such attacks would be the only strategy. This would be a true revolution, not just in military but in human affairs, since it would imply that the modern state, whose fundamental purpose is to protect its citizens, had become obsolete. It would mean that organizations or movements like al-Qai’da, which lack sovereignty and territory, yet have power and affect world politics, would no longer aspire, as al-Qai’da still does, to both sovereignty and territory. This political transformation may not be possible. If it is, whether it would return us to something like the world of the Middle Ages or propel us into some new world, it is not likely to happen within anything that could be considered a planning framework, unlike the rise of China or the acquisition by terrorists of CBRN. We therefore may acknowledge it as a possibility but ignore it as a factor in our planning.

118. Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*, New York: Basic Books, 1991; “Through a Glass Darkly: Some Reflections on the Future of War,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 53, Autumn 2000, pp. 25–44.

119. On this point, consider officer attitudes as reported in Thomas G. Mahnken and James R. FitzSimonds, *The Limits of Transformation: Officer Attitudes toward the Revolution in Military Affairs*, Newport Paper, No. 17, Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Press, 2003.

120. For a defense of this claim, see Gray, “Irregular Enemies and the Essence of Strategy,” pp. 35–38.