

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 35
Number 2 *Parameters Summer 2005*

Article 2

5-1-2005

Commentary & Reply

Parameters Editors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters>

Recommended Citation

Parameters Editors, "Commentary & Reply," *Parameters* 35, no. 2 (2005), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.2249.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by USAWC Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters by an authorized editor of USAWC Press.

Commentary & Reply

Intelligence Reform: More Needs to Be Done

To the Editor:

There are no simple answers when it comes to intelligence reform. The debate on this issue has suffered from decades of policy manipulation, congressional neglect, media ignorance, public inattention, and professional laziness. Senator Saxby Chambliss's *Parameters* article, "We Have Not Correctly Framed the Debate on Intelligence Reform" (Spring 2005), merits consideration and a complex response.

Senator Chambliss focuses on one personal objective, that of creating a military intelligence subcommittee within the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and three organizational objectives: creating a Director of Military Intelligence, much as Lieutenant General James Clapper (USAF ret.) sought to do in the 1990s; improving intelligence sharing across disciplinary stove-pipes and at all times, not just at the finished product level; and revitalizing clandestine human intelligence collection (HUMINT). I agree with all of these objectives, but more is required.

The new Director of Central Intelligence, who by his own admission spends five hours a day preparing for a 30- to 60-minute meeting with the President, might be described as the last of the industrial-era intelligence managers, who are characterized by 1950s mindsets, 1970s technologies, and 1990s priorities. This mindset, and the culture within which that mindset prevails, has not been altered by the recent legislation. If anything, we are now weaker than we were before because all of the money that Congress has thrown at the problem has caused both a proliferation of waste and an incestuous robbing of Peter to pay Paul—contractors out-bid one another to uproot perfectly functional intelligence professionals who are then placed in positions where they are less effective, but the contractors make an extra buck. The same problem exists in Special Operations. To describe this legislation as "sweeping" is to demean the term.

A few observations:

- Intelligence has been "flawed by design" from 1947 onward, and both Congress and the White House have persistently refused to attend to the recommendations of every commission since the two Hoover Commissions in the 1940s through to the Schlesinger review in the 1970s and on to the Aspin-Brown Commission in 1996, which one Senator personally scuttled for fear that his state would lose jobs. Intelligence reform requires a draconian elimination of military-industrial fraud, waste, and abuse; and members of Congress should be held accountable for refusing to bite the hand that feeds their political action committees. Only Bin Laden—and the widows and orphans Bin Laden produced—have altered the political dynamic. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) is part of the problem. Instead of trying to preserve its largely symbolic role (the Senate Armed Services Committee has all the power), the SSCI should be sponsoring intelligence subcommittees within

every jurisdiction, helping all of Congress to come to grips with the importance of intelligence across every jurisdiction, not only within the secret world.

- Intelligence is less than 20 percent—some would say less than 10 percent—of the information that is relevant to diplomatic, information, military, and economic interagency campaign planning, and at least 60 percent—some would say 80 percent—of all relevant intelligence is not secret, not in English, not online, and not known to anyone in the National Capital Area, much less down in the trenches. Special Operations leaders understand this, and have taken steps to move interagency collaboration and information-sharing out beyond the narrow domain of secret intelligence, and toward a more holistic environment where operational messages, logistics information, public affairs, civil affairs, military police—every element of information—can be shared. The Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence (USDI) is finally getting a grip on both the need for theater interagency collaboration centers and the need for a Defense Open Source Agency, both independent of secret intelligence management manipulation and constraint, and this is good. USDI—and its refusal to let the Defense Intelligence Agency screw up any more new initiatives—is a bright shining light in the DOD transformation endeavor.

- Intelligence without communications is irrelevant; communications without intelligence is noise. Marine Corps General Alfred M. Gray said this to Congress in the 1990s, and it is still true today. However, in today’s environment, neither intelligence nor communications can be effective without all-source processing, and this remains the sucking chest wound in the Department of Defense Global Information Grid and the rest of the US government, both within the US intelligence community and within the other agencies representing the varied instruments of national power—diplomatic, commercial, etc. The current obsession with Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) is an example of repeating the same mistake that continues to occur with our multi-billion-dollar remote technical collection programs—hundreds of billions spent on gold-plated collection systems, but relatively nothing on Tasking, Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination (TPED) systems with which to make sense of all the sources, all the time, at all levels (strategic, operational, tactical, technical).

- HUMINT is assuredly broken. A series of incapable DCIs and self-promoting Deputy Directors for Operations have converted what was once a stellar service into a cadre of messenger boys begging for scraps from foreign liaison. This problem began long ago with Admiral Stansfield Turner, who was enamored of technology and dismissive of ethnic case officers whose “mustang” qualities produced results in the field. However, to suggest that Bin Laden succeeded because HUMINT was broken is disingenuous at best. Everything we needed to know to prevent 9/11 was either known to the US government but not shared, or published in foreign open sources but not noticed.

- Strategic Communications and Stabilization & Reconstruction (S&R) Operations, both very capably studied by the Defense Science Board in 2004, are the two tracks that must guide our emerging redirection of DOD information and intelligence capabilities. In both instances, not only is most information needed to support these two mission areas not secret, but it must be shared with nongovernmental orga-

nizations and ad hoc coalition partners, including local law enforcement agencies, that cannot be supported under the current DOD Global Information Grid.

I support Senator Chambliss's limited objectives. There is, however, more that needs to be done.

Robert David Steele
CEO, OSS.Net, Inc.
Oakton, Virginia

The Author Replies:

True intelligence reform should be a long-term, coordinated process. My article highlighted four points that we should keep in focus as we begin this process:

- Recognize the problems with human intelligence (HUMINT) and take the necessary steps to fix it.
- Improve the quality of congressional oversight, which would include creating a subcommittee structure in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.
- Organize military intelligence by bringing unity of command to the enormous defense intelligence community.
- Devise ways to improve information-sharing, and the management of enormous amounts of intelligence.

Mr. Steele's thoughtful analysis of my article indicated that he agrees with these points but that more needs to be done to really reform the intelligence community. Mr. Steele is right, there is more to do.

During the intelligence reform debates in Congress last year, I was not an early advocate of the idea put forth by the 9/11 Commission that we should create the position of Director of National Intelligence (DNI) who would not be dual-hatted as the Director of the CIA. Over time, however, I came to see the wisdom of this approach and I voted for the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 that included the creation of the DNI.

There was one main reason why I eventually supported the DNI concept and I believe it addresses some of the issues raised by Mr. Steele. Under the previous construct, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was simultaneously responsible for running the CIA and for managing the entire intelligence community. As Congress looked at this arrangement, which has been with us since the National Security Act of 1947, it became evident that the DCI would normally be influenced by the prerogatives of the CIA and the non-CIA members of the intelligence community could not always view the DCI as an "honest broker," especially on matters where the CIA had a different view.

In retrospect, we should never have combined the DCI and CIA responsibilities. It simply goes against the human dimension. What was needed, and what the 9/11 Commission clearly identified as needed, was a holistic view of the intelligence community. The DNI can provide this view.

Mr. Steele raised some specific issues, such as exploiting open source information, improving communications, and the state of HUMINT. These issues, and others that transcend individual members of the intelligence community, can

now be addressed and implemented by the DNI. Congressional oversight also will be more effective by having one, accountable individual for national intelligence strategies and programs.

As I said earlier, intelligence reform is a process, and the DNI is an integral and important part of making the process work correctly.

My article was meant to point out some priority issues that the DNI and Congress need to address and to stimulate debate on the subject of intelligence reform. I appreciate Mr. Steele's comments and his contribution to this debate.

Senator Saxby Chambliss

Clausewitz and "How Has War Changed?"

To the Editor:

While I admire Colin Gray's work immensely, I must take issue with a point he makes in his otherwise excellent article, "How Has War Changed Since the End of the Cold War?" (*Parameters*, Spring 2005). Dr Gray argues that war's nature does not change, indeed, cannot change, otherwise war would become something else. He refers to Clausewitz's construct of "objective" and "subjective" natures of war to support his argument, stating that the objective nature of war (friction, danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance, etc.) is "permanent"—implying that it endures *without* change—and that only war's subjective nature (the means with which it is fought) changes. Clausewitz appears to have borrowed the construct from the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who used the former term to describe laws that were universal and thus applied everywhere, and the latter term to describe those laws that were valid only in certain cases. Accordingly, Clausewitz appears to have adopted the term objective to describe those elements or qualities that every war has in common (such as friction and chance), while he used the term subjective to refer to those qualities that vary from war to war, such as the types of armed forces employed and their weapons and tactics.

However, while war's objective elements are indeed present in every conflict, that does not mean that they do not or cannot change, and this is where I disagree with Dr. Gray. Nowhere in *On War* does Clausewitz say that the objective nature of war does not or cannot change; in fact, he makes quite the opposite point when he states that war is *more than* a simple chameleon that only partially changes its nature from case to case (*On War*, Book I, Chap. 1). We find evidence of this view when we compare the differences between what Clausewitz called wars of observation and wars of conquest. The political purposes (also a part of war's objective nature for Clausewitz) are quite different for each type of war, and the *degrees* of danger, chance, and uncertainty, etc., would also differ, and in some cases quite substantially. Thus, the objective elements of war's nature are "permanent" *only* in the sense that they are always present, but never in the sense that they do not or cannot change. Instead, they are always changing in intensity and relative significance, from war to war, or indeed even at different times in the same war. Otherwise, political purposes

could never be changed, an idea few of us would accept, and the degree of friction, danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance would have to be the same in every war—whether a war of observation or a nuclear holocaust—and would have to remain so, forever. In short, they would have to be independent (or constants) rather than the dependent variables that they are. If they were constants, we could measure and isolate them, and thus be free to develop the kinds of prescriptive theories that Clausewitz explicitly rejects as not representative of reality and often dangerous.

Instead, both the objective and subjective natures of war refer to dependent variables, or, more precisely, the two are interdependent; they are in every real sense utterly and irreversibly linked to each other, separable only on paper by an enterprising theorist. In other words, danger exists only because the means used to wage war make it dangerous, and because those means directly affect how much danger exists, and where, and when, and for how long. With respect to danger, as with all qualities of the nature of war, the enemy also has a vote. That fact, however, only makes war's nature all the more dynamic or, to use Clausewitz's words, more "complex" (*zusammengesetzte*) and "variable" (*veränderliche*) (*On War*, Book I, Chap. 2).

Hence, not only does war's subjective nature change, the intensity and significance of those elements that belong to war's objective nature are always in flux, and never constant. Thus, the nature of war as a whole is dynamic, as Clausewitz's "fascinating" (*wunderliche*) trinity at the end of Book I, Chapter 1, attempts to illustrate.

What does all this mean? First, it means that even if the objective nature of war only varies by degree, the fact that it does is significant. Second, it means that we *can* influence the objective nature of war—the amount of friction, danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance, for example—by the means we choose, but again, so can our opponent. While we might take measures to reduce uncertainty, for instance, our adversary can take measures to counter ours, and vice versa; thus, we can never be sure of the end result. It also means that one-sided, McNamaraesque formulae and facile, prescriptive theories like effects-based operations will always be around because the arrogance that underpins such thinking seeks to control the variable nature of war. Finally, it means that it is possible for war to have a changeable nature, and yet still be war.

Dr. Antulio Echevarria II
Director of Research, Strategic Studies Institute
US Army War College

The Author Replies:

As an admiring student of Dr. Echevarria's writings on Clausewitz, I know that we do not disagree. In point of fact, I am considerably indebted to his treatment of the issue of "the nature of war" in his 2003 SSI monograph, *Globalization and the Nature of War*. He will find himself cited with warm approval in a paper I wrote on Clausewitz in 2003 that is scheduled to appear in an edited book from Cambridge University Press.

Following an initial moment of panic, I realized that Dr. Echevarria and I are in complete agreement, only we are choosing to emphasize different aspects

of the subject. I am claiming, with Clausewitz—and indeed with Dr. Echevarria and common sense—that war has a permanent, unchanging nature, comprising “danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance,” as well as “friction” and political meaning, *inter alia*. He is arguing that the elements of that nature are always changing in their sundry effects from situation to situation. I agree entirely. However, I do not believe that variations in the degree of danger, for example, or the ability to contain the risks from chance events, constitute a change in the nature of war. Elsewhere (in my *Modern Strategy*, ch.1, and in *Strategy for Chaos*) I have argued that strategy also has a permanent nature with unchanging dimensions. As with war, I contend that from historical case to case the relative importance among those dimensions will differ.

Dr. Echevarria quotes Clausewitz, though without quotation marks, as saying that “war is *more than* a simple chameleon that only partially changes its nature from case to case.” But that is not quite what the Great Man said. The standard Howard and Paret translation reads as follows: “War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its *characteristics* to the given case” (emphasis added).

In my *Parameters* article I believed, and still believe, that this matter of war’s nature is settled beyond a reasonable doubt by Clausewitz’s assertion that “All wars are things of the *same* nature” (emphasis in *On War*). If all wars, in all periods and of all kinds, have the same nature, which is Clausewitz’s unqualified claim, it is quite a stretch to argue that he really meant that war’s “objective,” as well as its “subjective,” nature, is ever-changing. Of course, Dr. Echevarria is correct, but only with reference to the degree and significance of the effects of the permanent elements of that nature.

This is the kind of non-controversy that is apt to generate more confusion than clarity. We agree that war has a nature comprising such elements as friction and chance that are always present. We agree also that the relations among, and relative importance of, each of those elements are ever variable. Notwithstanding my great respect for Dr. Echevarria’s Clausewitzian scholarship, I believe that my argument is actually Clausewitz’s argument. I did not deem it necessary to explain that such eternal features as friction, chance, uncertainty, and the rest will always manifest themselves in historically distinctive ways. Perhaps incorrectly, I thought the point was too obvious to be worth making. Furthermore, I failed to suggest that, just possibly, the effects of some of these eternal elements can be alleviated, or even exploited, by conscious human effort. Perhaps I should have done.

Dr. Echevarria’s argument is a perilous one because, inadvertently I am sure, it must encourage those among us who are not strategic theorists or historians to believe that they can transform the untransformable. It is precisely in order to apply a healthy dose of skepticism that I have elected to give prominence to the unchanging natures of war and strategy. At the same time, I grant the obvious, indeed self-evident truth, that the characteristics of war and warfare frequently are in flux.

Clausewitz must be allowed the final word on what is after all his theory of war: to repeat, “All wars are things of the *same* nature.” The defense rests.

Colin S. Gray