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From the Editor

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From the Editor

In This Issue . . .

Gian Gentile opens the thematic presentation “COIN and the People” with his examination of the American Army’s focus on population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN). In his article, “A Strategy of Tactics: Population-centric COIN and the Army,” the author provides a persuasive argument that the US military’s myopic focus on population-centric counterinsurgency is a direct result of the 2006 publication of Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Gentile espouses the belief that over-emphasis with regard to the role played by the populace has perverted the Army’s focus and warfighting capabilities, limiting its ability to improvise and respond to differing threats. He believes this new way of war (population-centric counterinsurgency) has become the only operational tool in the Army’s repertoire capable of dealing with problems of insurgency and instability. The author concludes that population-centric COIN may be an effective operational methodology, but it should never be considered a strategy. Heather S. Gregg provides readers with a differing perspective in “Beyond Population Engagement: Understanding Counterinsurgency.” The author bases her thesis on the belief that whichever side wins the support of the population—wins the battle. She poignantly reminds the reader that the battle is not the war. The war, in fact, requires transitioning from the short-term objectives associated with population engagement to the long-term viability of the host nation as reflected in a stable and functioning state. Gregg believes it is critical that America’s military understands that its long-term goal is much more than simply winning the population over to a particular philosophy or belief; it requires the successful execution of the near-term measures that support the establishment of a functional state. In support of her conclusion, the author provides a detailed examination of three analytical stages required to achieve victory in COIN: population engagement, stability operations, and the creation of a functioning state.

Michael S. Gerson revisits vestiges of the Cold War in his examination of “Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age.” The author highlights the fact that deterrence is once again a popular topic of discussion within the US defense and policy communities. As part of these adversary-specific deterrence strategies, there is renewed interest in the role conventional weapons might play in national and international security decisions. Gerson establishes a context for his argument by means of a detailed analysis of the factors influencing the military’s expansion of “strategic deterrence” to incorporate nuclear and conventional forces, as well as a nation’s diplomatic, economic, and information tools. The author closes with a warning that this increased role for conventional forces requires

new thinking regarding conventional capabilities, targeting doctrine, warfighting strategies, force deployment, and strategic communication necessary to deter both conventional and weapons of mass destruction-armed adversaries.

“Playing for the Breaks: Insurgent Mistakes” is Lincoln B. Krause’s interpretation of a phrase offered by the iconic counterinsurgent Robert Thompson during a 1989 interview. Thompson was expounding on the various phases of a successful counterinsurgency strategy and concluded his remarks with “playing for the breaks.” “Breaks,” in Thompson’s strategy, entail changes in the situation on the international, national, and local levels—changes generated by the critical errors of insurgent leaders. Krause examines a number of insurgencies to determine that despite the pivotal role played by insurgent mistakes, academics and practitioners continue to concentrate disproportionately on the government’s role in combating and defeating insurgencies. There is virtually no mention in the related genre of the incidence or function of insurgent mistakes. The author divides insurgent strategic mistakes into two categories: “original sin” and “situational miscalculations.” He focuses his analysis on the latter to determine that the majority of these mistakes are made by insurgent leaders during the early portion of the insurgency and often involve decisions related to intermediate objectives and tactics. Krause then analyzes the ten most likely situational miscalculations made by insurgent leaders and concludes that the US military needs to not only recognize their existence, but also integrate the lessons-learned from these mistakes into current doctrine.

Our second thematic offering in this issue, “Irregular Warfare and the Interagency Process,” showcases the work of two well-known strategists. Lew Irwin’s “Filling Irregular Warfare’s Interagency Gaps” provides readers with insight into the US government’s failure to apply the full weight of its instruments of power during irregular conflicts. The author believes this failure is mainly due to the inability or unwillingness of government agencies to agree upon the correct ends, ways, and means required. These failures can have dire consequences for America’s national security and serve to thwart what the author terms the “whole-of-government” approach to irregular warfare. Irwin readily admits that almost everyone recognizes the need for reform of the interagency process, but few can agree on the prescriptions for that improvement. Too many, the author argues, focus on improved coordinating mechanisms as a panacea. He warns that this is not only wrong, but it ignores history, human nature, and the practical experience gleaned from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Irwin concludes that the real issue is the US government’s failure to properly integrate and coordinate agency resources and efforts, caused primarily by disjointedness of authority and vision at the national-strategic level. His call for the creation of a new functional combatant command, the US Humanitarian Assistance and Development Command, led by the State Department or an associated agency, is certain to energize the dialogue. The second article in this feature is by one of the Army War College’s own, Nathan Freier. His “The De-

fense Identity Crisis: It's a Hybrid World" examines the recent debate associated with "hybrid warfare," in an attempt to determine what agency should provide the appropriate response to "hybrid threats." Freier recognizes the fact that many concept developers and doctrine writers are anxious to pen a pristine, doctrine-ready definition of hybrid war; wanting to neatly categorize and define every aspect of military affairs related to these new concepts and threats, while dictating what agency is best resourced to meet them. The author cautions that in examining these particular aspects of military affairs, patience is the required virtue. He reminds strategists that many of these defense challenges (hybrid threats) may be nothing more than examples of cunning leadership in response to US or western military superiority. Freier's analysis of the challenges posed by various contingencies only serves to reinforce the fact that the Department of Defense is America's most viable first responder. He closes with a question that will certainly be asked, in one form or another, of every modern Secretary of Defense: "If not you, then who?"

We are departing from our regular editorial policy associated with the "Commentary & Reply" feature to provide readers with a moving and insightful incursion into the world of America's "Wounded Warriors." Normally, *Parameters* does not publish first-person narratives, especially those dealing with Army programs and policies. In the case of Chuck Callahan's "To Stay a Soldier," we had to make an exception. Every referee who reviewed the manuscript reinforced my original assessment, "A wonderful story that deserves to be told, but it is not quite right for *Parameters*." A gentle rejection based on those assessments would have been the easy way out. Obviously, we did not take that path. Please enjoy this story of caring for America's battle-worn heroes.

Our "Review Essay" feature presents another of George Quester's superb reviews of a number of new entries to the market. "Our Nuclear Future" provides an analysis of four books touting a plausible future for nuclear weapons. Quester focuses his review essay on the authors' theses detailing what such a future might look like. The reviewer highlights those portions of the books rebutting sage predictions of escalation and rapid proliferation. The "Book Reviews" section of the journal again offers expert appraisals on an array of contemporary literature of interest to senior military and defense professionals. Kevin J. Cogan leads the way with a perceptive review of P. W. Singer's latest effort, *Wired for War*. Robert H. Dorff contributes an excellent look at Harry Yarger's *Strategy and the National Security Professional*. James H. Toner offers a deeply insightful analysis of *Partly Cloudy*, by David Perry. John Nagl brings his vast expertise to bear in his consideration of James S. Corum's *Bad Strategies*. These and other reviews will almost certainly send readers dashing to a favorite bookstore or online outlet. — RHT □