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FUTURE WAR PAPER

Comprehensive Engagement: A Winning Strategy

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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AY 2007-08

Mentor:

Approved: _____

Date: _____

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 2008		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Comprehensive Engagement: A Winning Strategy				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps, School of Advanced Warfighting, Marine Corps University, 2076 South Street, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 42	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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ABSTRACT

Title: Comprehensive Engagement: A Winning Strategy

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Thesis: **The Marine Corps will have to implement comprehensive engagement at the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level by changing planner mindsets, creating a mechanism for change, and re-structuring the planning staff.**

Discussion: Comprehensive engagement is a way for the United States to develop a more positive perception of its actions and motives in the world. This strategy focuses on engaging groups/nations that the United States can help achieve what is called a status quo. In this context, status quo means reaching a point where the targeted group/nation becomes stable and balanced. This strategy will be a Phase Zero approach that could span years or decades. Future assumptions lead towards more of a small war and full spectrum operational focus, which are both well-suited for a comprehensive engagement strategy. The Marine Corps must recognize this future strategic requirement now to adjust mindsets to a more non-conventional focus, create mechanisms to implement the strategy, and adjust planning staffs to meet the requirement. These actions will be best implemented at the MEF level. The MEF provides the crucial operational link from the strategic goals to the tactical capabilities the Marine Corps has for conducting comprehensive engagement. MEFs will be able to focus on the diverse set of groups/nations within their areas of operation and conduct the operational cultural analysis for each that will serve as the basis for the comprehensive engagement campaign design. Actions using comprehensive engagement at the MEF level can be tactical in execution, but their additive effect synergized into a comprehensive engagement campaign plan will have decisive strategic impacts in the future. The key is to implement the changes now that will lead to the development and practice of the operational art required to link these complex concepts for a complex strategy that takes place years before any kinetic actions may be required. This kind of planning is a distinct departure from the conventional mindsets that have existed over time. However, if the Marine Corps can embrace this strategy and successfully demonstrate to the American public that the strategy can work, it will send the type of message Americans can believe in, which will subsequently drive the government to provide more support.

Recommendation: Adjust doctrine to reflect the comprehensive engagement campaign design presented. This type of problem-setting should be codified as part of the Commander's Battlefield Area Estimate (CBAE) when dealing with small wars or operations requiring a full spectrum approach. MEF level planning staffs should address the unique planning requirements necessary to make this strategy work by organizing and/or expanding the staff to man a cell that can handle this type of planning full-time. All MEF level operations should be viewed as Phase Zero operations in order to ensure the staff has the mindset that comprehensive engagement will permeate most future deployments of any kind. Wherever Marines are sent, they should be thinking about how to engage and build relationships.

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PREFACE

The idea for this paper has been in my mind since my tour in III MEF during 2005 and 2006 while conducting or planning for several regional exercises and contingency operations. Specifically, while deployed to the Philippines, I was involved in humanitarian assistance operations and numerous community relations projects throughout the region. Being a logistics officer, I am in a field that often gets to use its resources to do projects like these while the infantry and air units are able to practice traditional conventional training.

It dawned on me that while helping people who had never seen an American before, much less a Marine, that these kinds of actions could have a greater strategic impact if coordinated in some fashion. The people we helped will never forget what we did for them. It made me realize that you can change the world one person at a time if you can embrace the art of the possible. However, there is a down side. The first time the United States helps people, we are welcomed with open arms. But, if the military does not return, or uses these operations to get something in return, the people who initially love us lose faith fast. The enemy knows this. Therefore, not only anything we do is exploitable, but also what we do not do.

While attending the USMC School of Advanced Warfighting this year, my thoughts coalesced into what you will read in this paper. This topic is a continuing journey for me --- this paper represents where I am right now with regard to where I think the future will take the Marine Corps and the United States. My limited experiences with helping people the previous two years have provided some clues to solving some real problems in the world. The United States military has become very good at conventional operations to the point where we have no challenger. I think some smart enemies out there realize this now more than ever and will cultivate other ways to get at us over longer periods of time than the traditional conventional

cycle of operations is geared towards. I believe the enemy sees the same things that I did the previous two years, only they have seen them for a lot longer than me and are much better at manipulating indigenous people of various cultures than I could ever hope to understand. While the United States will always have to maintain its dominance in solving the hard conventional problems of the world, I believe there are other problems across the spectrum of operations with the small war concept that are the real complex problems military planners will have to solve in the future to truly establish peaceful environments.

The enemy is way ahead of us in Phase Zero, but the military has to start somewhere. The more we wait as a military profession, the more we will end up creating conventional reactions for an unconventional enemy vice identifying and solving the real complex problem. As a Marine Corps Officer, this paper is my starting point, and it is designed to make the conventional thinker consider something else, at least conceptually if anything. The changes I recommend may not be the answer, but there are answers out there. Hopefully, this paper will at the least get the reader to think about and come up with a better way to deal with the complex problems the military will face in the future.

The indigenous people I met while deployed around the Asia-Pacific region are a big part of the solution, and the Marine Corps must initiate the engagement effort and figure out how to help them, one person at a time if need be. Military organizations must try to understand the people who only want to live in peace and raise their families without fear so that operations can be designed to help them reach that goal. The military, if creatively applied, has the ability to do this. When we do, the people the military helps consistently will never accept the enemy into their midst, which will isolate and ultimately allow the military to destroy him.

Introduction

The overall strategic environment in the future will revolve around requirements for national security that focus on strategic comprehensive engagement.¹ For this paper, comprehensive engagement will utilize a status quo approach.² Status quo, in this context, achieves a balanced, stable society. For the military, helping groups/nations achieve status quo will mean operating in small war and full spectrum operational environments. Previous United States executive administrations used this strategy to work somewhat successfully with China, Vietnam, and North Korea.³ As a result, in 2009, a new United States executive administration will look at utilizing a comprehensive engagement concept in its first published National Security Strategy (NSS). To facilitate this future strategic requirement, the Marine Corps will use a comprehensive engagement strategy at the operational level to develop the basis for peaceful conflict resolution by using integrated approaches in helping others to re-shape their identities in a way that will help them reach their status quo.⁴ To facilitate this concept, the Marine Corps will have to implement comprehensive engagement at the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level by changing planner mindsets, creating a mechanism for change, and re-structuring the planning staff.

This paper will focus on an innovative way to augment the Commander's Battlefield Space Evaluation (CBAE) to better inform the Marine Corps Planning Process (MCP). Joint campaign design and operational cultural analysis concepts will be embedded within the innovation in order to successfully apply comprehensive engagement at the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) level. These concepts are represented in Figures 1 and 2 below, while Appendix C displays how Figures 1 and 2 fit within the overall doctrinal framework of the MCP. These figures will be the basis for discussion and description of concepts for the rest of

the paper. I will first examine the nature of the problem and the assumptions and counter-arguments that need to be presented at the strategic and tactical levels of war to provide a backdrop for the necessary mindset changes, mechanisms, and staff adjustments. I will then propose an option for a way to look at designing a comprehensive engagement campaign utilizing the CBAE, MCPP, and applicable joint and cultural publications. Finally, I will present an option for a MEF staff re-organization that could be used to effectively implement the proposed framework.

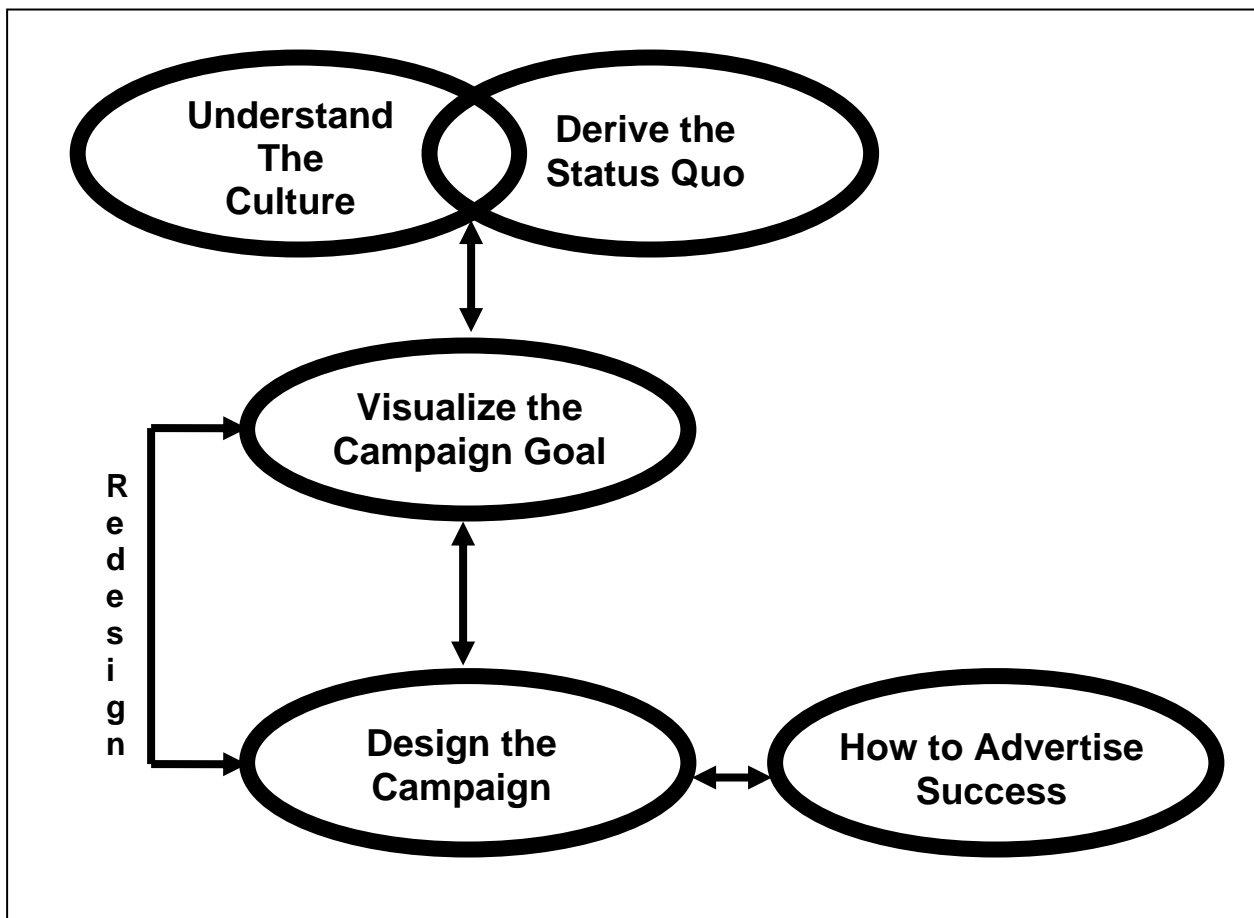


Figure 1: Comprehensive Engagement Conceptual Planning

1. First, understand the culture ...

Understand Basic Model Analysis:

1. Ecological
2. Social structure
3. Symbolic

Subsequently, the dynamics of the culture along:

1. Environment
2. Economy
3. Social Structure
4. Political Structure
5. Belief Systems

2. This will tell you what that culture 's status quo is ...

Ask and answer, based on your understanding of the culture:

1. What is it?
2. Why is it that way?
3. How come it is that way?
4. What does it need to maintain status quo or reach it if it is not there?

Subsequently, determine engagement criteria:

1. Humanitarian assistance
2. Military exchange
3. Cultural exchange visits
4. Mil to Mil training
5. Security cooperation
6. Disaster relief
7. Infrastructure development
8. Port visits
9. Community relations projects
10. Others ...

3. Visualize the initial campaign goal ...

Campaign Goal
(Culture achieves or maintains favorable status quo)

The campaign goal utilizing an engagement strategy will stem from the cultural status quo of the targeted group/nation. Ultimately, engagement seeks to stabilize the targeted group/nation by helping it to reach the status quo. The campaign goal should address that directly.

4. Then, design the campaign ...

At this point, you can take the campaign goal and engagement criteria into the OPT. Options are numerous in how to set the battlefield framework. One option is to use comprehensive engagement as a single line of operation, the campaign goal as the endstate, and the engagement criteria as the basis to form intermediate objectives. From that, effects and tasks can be set that achieve the campaign goal.

5. Advertise Success...

In a comprehensive engagement campaign plan, measuring success will never come in a quantitative fashion. Based on the cultural status quo, every tactical success as judged by the people we are engaging with must be broadcast to all segments of American society and the world. Images of the Marine Corps forward deployed helping other cultures for no other reason than our ability and interest to do so on a consistent basis will make a decisive impression over time. If the enemy chooses to exploit the soft nature of engagement operations, kinetic actions in response will be justifiable. Instead of turning that culture against the US, it will only cement its support. The humanitarian nature of engagement operations and the message it sends can promote decisive strategic goals over a long period of time.

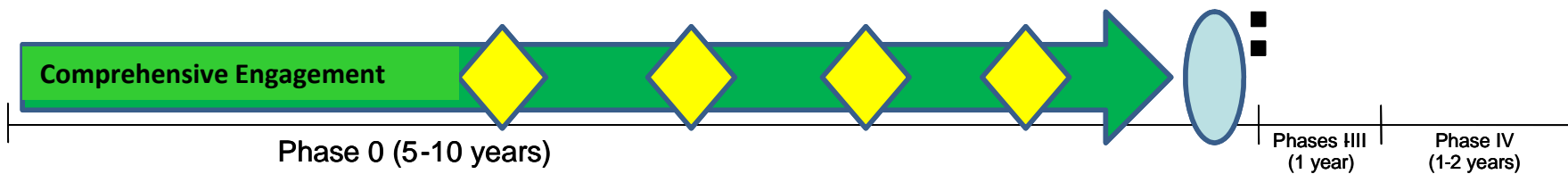


Figure 2: Comprehensive Engagement Campaign Design Methodology

The Nature of the Problem

Types of Wars

The military is required to participate in two types of wars: (1) fire and maneuver and (2) “small wars.” Small wars are defined as:

Operations undertaken under executive authority, wherein military force is combined with diplomatic pressure in the internal or external affairs of another state whose government is unstable, inadequate, or unsatisfactory for the preservation of life and of such interests as are determined by the foreign policy of our Nation⁵

The writer contends that the “when” and “how” of the use of military force is not specified and is key when discussing mindset changes. The dictionary definition of “force” means not only “violent compulsion,” but also “the capacity to persuade or convince.”⁶ The Marine Corps must plan to be ready for “when” and “how” to use force in any phase of military operations and to use creative methods when using force to persuade or convince. The recent version of *Field Manual 3.0, Operations*, focuses on a similar concept, “full spectrum operations.” Full spectrum operations describe force in both lethal and non-lethal ways across a wide variety of kinetic and non-kinetic operations.⁷ Future warfare will require the Marine Corps to truly embrace small wars and full spectrum operations in order to be effective “when” and “how” strategic comprehensive engagement will be employed. Specifically, the Marine Corps, due to its expeditionary nature and core competencies, will find itself engaged in many socially, culturally, and geographically unstable areas in the future as defined by the small war and full spectrum operation.

Mindset Problem

Al-Qaeda uses the United States’ conventional military actions against it through negative characterization campaigns to promote Al-Qaeda’s political ideology as a better way for a

targeted group/nation to achieve their status quo. The target is those segments of society in unstable areas that are not able, for whatever reason, to achieve a status quo (see Appendix A). The current problem is that military planners tend to deal with this situation with conventional mindsets. Doctrine, until recent history, focused more on utilizing conventional methods to solve kinetic problems. Therefore, a mindset shift must occur that embraces the small war as a legitimate type of war that planners will increasingly have to deal with in the future. It is difficult for the military to associate conventional campaign plans and objectives to meet this threat because any actions taken will be exploited in a negative fashion not only to other Muslims, but also to the American people and its allies (see Appendix B). As a result, conventional solutions to small war or full spectrum operational problems only help the enemy. However, there is currently no mechanism that allows planners to adapt to this situation. Planners are often forced to adapt conventional frameworks and concepts to small wars or full spectrum operations. Consequently, the problem is first one of mindset change and, second, the lack of a mechanism that can accurately set the problem.

Assumptions and Counter-Arguments

Strategic Assumption

Small wars, by definition, will dominate a post-Iraq forward military presence posture by the United States. The American people, by voice and by vote, will be reluctant to commit troops to a long term, high intensity conflict based on what has happened in Iraq over the last five years. While the new President will have listen to the people in this regard, the United States must still utilize a strategy that addresses threats to national security. The President of the United States can still commit forces under executive authority. Subsequently, the military, as well as a new

executive branch in 2009, will be left with a strategic planning void. This void will be filled by a comprehensive engagement strategy depicted by the new administration's National Security Strategy (NSS) and employed by the executive arm of the government with the military as the primary tool. The other elements/tools of national power will never be as responsive as the military at the beginning of an operation, which is when operations utilizing comprehensive engagement will be most effective.

Engagement strategies are not new. Since the end of the Cold War, engagement strategy has been called "comprehensive containment, conditional containment, conditional engagement, limited engagement, quid pro quo engagement, conengagement, unconditional engagement, and comprehensive engagement."⁸ As a result, engagement strategy represents a "conceptual fog" in today's environment.⁹ However, the Clinton Administration attempted to dissipate this fog with the first post-Cold War, multi-faceted definition proposed in its NSS, which stated that engagement strategy is:

- (1) a broad based grand strategic orientation;
- (2) a specific approach to managing bilateral relations with a target state through the unconditional provision of continuous concessions to that state;
- (3) a bilateral policy characterized by the conditional provision of concessions to a state;
- (4) a bilateral policy characterized by the broadening of contacts in areas of mutual interest with a target state; and
- (5) a bilateral policy characterized by the provision of technical assistance to facilitate economic and political liberalization in a target state.¹⁰

This definition of engagement has been the most successful historically.¹¹

Strategic Counter-Argument

Opponents of this strategy charge that it appeases potentially dangerous nations and, that without the threat of force, it is ineffective. The Clinton definition of engagement would seem to bolster this claim. To succeed, the Clinton definition of engagement would require a heavy

application of the diplomatic and economic elements of national power. Diplomatic and economic efforts have been difficult in the past and are often viewed as a solution for the future, but perceptions of success have varied, and the government will consistently be too slow to respond during a Phase Zero approach to render relevant assistance to military operations.¹² As a result, the strategic requirement for comprehensive engagement will exist, but due to the lack of proven mechanisms for implementation by the United States government, not all the support required at the national level to complement the military's efforts will be present, especially in the next few years. The other key element of national power, the military, has opponents of this strategy who argue that shifting resources to execute campaign plans based on comprehensive engagement will erode the ability of the military over time to conduct large-scale, conventional, theater level operations, or fire and maneuver wars. Based on these arguments, comprehensive engagement does not seem like a viable solution to the problem faced.

Tactical Assumption

The Marine Corps in particular will be a prime candidate for being employed by the executive branch as the means to employ comprehensive engagement due to its location, forward presence, flexibilities, and core capabilities. The Marine Corps is positioned, or consistently forward deployed, near a majority of unstable nations susceptible to groups such as Al-Qaeda. This statement is especially true in the Pacific Theater, where the Marine Corps maintains a significant overseas presence both on ship and land and will continue to do so well into the future. If the Marine Corps waits for more money, new technology, more forces, or immediate help from other branches of the government to implement a comprehensive engagement strategy successfully, it will lose the significant amount of time and effort required for Phase Zero

operations, where the current enemy is most vulnerable. In the words of retired USMC General Anthony Zinni, who was the deputy commanding general for operation PROVIDE COMFORT in Iraq and Turkey in 1991 and the operations officer for UNITAF in Somalia for OPERATION RESTORE HOPE in 1993, “Strategy is not realized in ideas. It is realized in the foxhole. It must drive actions and the systems and structures that produce action.”¹³

The Marine Corp Intelligence Activity’s future assessment of possible operational environments offers a vision that supports the assumption that the Marine Corps will be involved in operations that will fall under the definition of comprehensive engagement. Specifically, the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity noted in its recent midrange threat estimate that:

Marines will be expected to perform missions at and beyond the littoral regions, to include stability and support operations, counterinsurgency operations, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and nation building, peace operations, combating terrorism, counter proliferation and nonproliferation, combating drug trafficking and crime, and noncombatant evacuation operations.¹⁴

The current Marine Corps document titled, *The Long War, Sending in the Marines*, focuses specifically on Phase Zero operations and the necessity for the Marine Corps to mitigate the underlying conditions that make instability possible. A Marine Corps focus on Phase Zero leads to utilizing comprehensive engagement as a possible tactical method.¹⁵ The Marine Corps is already utilizing a Phase Zero approach in Africa, where the requirements have been identified that match criteria for comprehensive engagement. Specifically:

The need for a culturally aware, persistent presence cannot be overemphasized when dealing with African military, civil, and tribal leaders. The cultivation of long-term relationships can be a force multiplier in engagement efforts. Building meaningful relationships and developing relevant capabilities are keys to effective engagement in Africa and will require more changes to current mindsets, organization, capabilities, training, and education.¹⁶

Subsequently, the Marine Corps can expect that combatant commanders will require adaptive, well-trained forces with small footprints to implement their theater security cooperation, contingency, and engagement plans at the tactical level.¹⁷

Tactical Counter-Argument

Employing the Marine Corps in this fashion inherently incurs risk that the American people may not want to accept. When operating in hostile environments with no body armor and weapons that are not visible due to the tactical requirements a comprehensive engagement strategy would require in order to be credible and successful, the military would be open targets for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. Marines shot down in the streets while attempting to conduct humanitarian relief as part of an overall comprehensive engagement strategy may be more than the American people are willing to bear -- and, the enemy knows this. To complicate this situation further, assessing results tactically and how the results affect the overall strategic requirements in a campaign using comprehensive engagement are, and always will be, difficult to determine. Military mindsets require measurable results, which can often be depicted numerically in fire and maneuver wars. Engagement strategies require significant time at the tactical level during Phase Zero to assess effects, which could take years or decades to accomplish. This timeframe currently exceeds any patience the conventional military mindset has for effective results.

Operational Art

The counter-arguments on the strategic and tactical levels lead to the most difficult counter-argument to overcome: There seems to be no point in planning a campaign that looks good on paper, but has no basis in reality. The strategic requirement will be laid out, but the Marine Corps will not receive decisive help initially from the other elements of national power (i.e., diplomacy, information, economics), nor will the American people support an effort with the risk involved at the tactical level. Therefore, it seems nearly impossible to practice operational “art”

by linking these two assumptions that tell us comprehensive engagement will fail from the start. Hence, opponents of a comprehensive engagement strategy would argue that the United States must continue to be the world power by spending precious time and resources on conventional and technological solutions to winning wars.

Although opponents of this strategy make compelling, common sense, and realistic arguments, the Marine Corps has the opportunity to serve as a grass roots level example on how to counter those arguments. These arguments will only dissipate when something tangible is accomplished and sold to the American people. Since strategy can stem from the foxhole, the Marine Corps can make changes now that will prove these arguments wrong in the future. Once that is done, the other elements of national power and Congress will follow because the people will demand the changes. Marine Corps planners at the MEF level can link the tactical tasks to the strategic tasks and derive objectives that will make comprehensive engagement work. The following sections will describe how this linking will be accomplished.

Three Elements for Comprehensive Engagement Campaign Design

Mindset Change

The enemy prefers to operate in areas that are in a “simmering” stage.¹⁸ This is Phase Zero, where comprehensive engagement will be most effective. Phase Zero is also where the Marine Corps has the potential to educate higher levels of command within the United States military and government from the grass roots level in order to affect bottom-up changes in how to deal with the problem.¹⁹ Subsequently, the first step in a comprehensive engagement strategy is to change military planner mindset, followed by the commander.²⁰ The mindset change comes first by embracing the potential that comprehensive engagement has during Phase Zero, and then by a

campaign design that concentrates on achieving status quo in targeted areas first in the pre-conflict phase (Phase Zero), utilizing kinetic action only when that effort is failing.²¹ The Marine Corps document, titled *The Long War, Sending in the Marines*, speaks specifically about having an agile and flexible mindset, which also speaks to the core of how and why Figures 1 and 2 were constructed.²²

Looking at Figures 1 and 2, the key to the mindset change comes through prioritizing the cultural analysis to inform CBAE. Planners and commanders do not always gravitate to this kind of problem setting, especially for a Phase Zero focus over long periods of time. Typically, the focus is centered on Phase III and now Phase IV operations, both in training and practice. Comprehensive engagement is a Phase Zero approach, which suggests why there must be a shift in planner and commander mindset.

For a conventional mindset to shift to comprehensive engagement, a mechanism must also support the shift for the commander in the visualization phase of the planning process in order to set the problem correctly, translate the problem into the CBAE, and subsequently prepare the OPT for effective application of the MCPP.²³ Most importantly, the mindset change must occur at the MEF level, where operational art is practiced in order to link tactical realities on the ground to strategic or higher operational goals, which are set by higher echelons of command. “Operational art is the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs — supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience — to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces.”²⁴ For the MEF to be successful with a comprehensive engagement strategy, MEF planners must be able to use operational art while conducting the MCPP.

Mechanism for Change

There are many options embedded within current Joint, Army, and Marine Corps doctrine to utilize as mechanisms for designing a comprehensive engagement campaign plan. Specifically, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, “Counterinsurgency,” was published recently in an obvious attempt to draw some attention away from problem setting with a strictly conventional mindset and focusing attention on ways to design campaigns to deal with counterinsurgency. However, since comprehensive engagement deals with a Phase Zero approach over many years, other key documents should also be considered by planners and commanders that emphasize campaign design and creative problem setting up front to deal with the complex scenarios comprehensive engagement will be required to address in the future. Specifically, Joint Publication 5.0 “Joint Operation Planning” stresses campaign design at the joint level, and Field Manual 3.0 “Operations” focuses on the emerging requirement to have forces capable of executing full spectrum operations.

The mechanism utilized at the MEF level must take some of the tools and concepts from all of these publications, construct an operational culture profile of the targeted area, and follow with a concept of design along an extended timeline that emphasizes campaign goals oriented around prevention of conflict during Phase Zero. Figure 1 depicts how the commander and key planners must conceptually visualize the comprehensive engagement, while Figure 2 depicts a campaign design model that translates comprehensive engagement into CBAE. In a MEF’s case, higher combatant or component level commands may set certain goals that initiate the comprehensive engagement planning model depicted in Figures 1 and 2, but those goals must be visualized at the MEF level in order to properly link the eventual tactical tasks to higher operational or strategic level goals. This model becomes the vital part of an innovation to the MCPP’s CBAE.

This innovation will set the problem for a campaign based on comprehensive engagement through the CBAE, which will subsequently lead to the best planning guidance for the MCPP.

Figure 2 provides more granularity as to what goes into the CBAE for a comprehensive engagement campaign plan for/by a MEF commander. Understanding the local culture is the most important analysis and should be done up front. It is the key element of a comprehensive engagement campaign plan. By understanding how the culture works, the commander and his planners can properly derive the targeted group's/nation's status quo. Once the culture and status quo are understood, designers can ask the what, why, and how come for whatever the status quo is in order to determine good engagement criteria; and, those answers will be the basis for the campaign design. Specifically, recent military research, such as *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Application* sponsored by Marine Corps University, provides detailed methods to conduct the initial cultural profile indicated in Figure 2 and can be utilized by any planner to begin the comprehensive engagement strategy process.²⁵

Through analysis of the culture and subsequent criteria development, a campaign goal or goals can be set initially between the commander and the key planners. This goal(s) should be derived to help the targeted culture reach its status quo and should be the commander's endstate. In addition, intermediate objectives can be set to help planners eventually break down the selected engagement criteria into achievable lines of operation or tasks for subordinate units. The resulting CBAE should set the problem for the MCPP in order to allow planners to construct the correct framework to solve the operational/tactical problem. For this reason, it is crucial to have key planners and the commander set the problem based on an initial cultural analysis and before the operational planning team (OPT) starts mission analysis. Otherwise, the wrong problem will be solved

Another key to this part of the campaign design is the feedback from planning and execution to the commander through the MCPP and subsequent operations. Planners realize that in today's environment and through complex problem solving: design and execution informs planning and planning informs design and execution. The commander, key planners, and OPTs must be ready to redesign a campaign at any time based on cultural profile updating and status quo adjustments. It is most important for the success of the campaign for the commander, if possible, to adjust the comprehensive engagement campaign design when planning vice pushing through to execution with an uninformed design.²⁶ Execution based on uninformed design could have disastrous consequences when engaging new groups/nations with the wrong solution.

Before CBAE is issued to the OPT, the final step of thinking through how the plan should advertise success must be considered. Advertising success means how and what type of information will be disseminated to higher echelons of command, the American people, and the world. The way the Marine Corp can make comprehensive engagement work is to advertise success. In fact, the Marine Corps is currently executing operations that would fit within the engagement criteria in Figure 2 at the MEF level.²⁷ However, these operations are currently not linked together towards an endstate at the MEF level based on a status quo cultural assessment and have not been widely publicized since they ended. Nevertheless, these operations and subsequent positive influence they have had on the groups the Marine Corps has engaged with demonstrates that the potential exists for campaign planning in Phase Zero based on a comprehensive engagement concept. If the Marine Corps adopts a comprehensive engagement planning methodology at the MEF level, successful images of how the military service supports the nation's strategy could have an immediate effect. Therefore, it is crucial for the MEFs to

have both information operations and public affairs plans embedded within the comprehensive engagement campaign plan, and aggressive and innovative officers to implement them.

Possible Staff Change

Once mindsets and mechanisms change, planning staff structure changes must be considered to support them. Based on Figure 2, there are options available to create a comprehensive engagement planning and liaison cell within the G-5 to set the problem for the key planners' discussion with the commander while developing CBAE and subsequent campaign design. This structure change could be accomplished through a re-structuring of planning priorities within the G-5 by dedicating military planners to design comprehensive engagement campaign plans. Or, a structural increase in civilian planners and subject matter experts (SMEs) within the cell could augment planning efforts. Membership in this cell is limited only by one's imagination and should be tailored towards the necessary experts to implement the model in Figure 2 and individuals who can have a decisive impact on whatever region is being targeted. This part of the cell could include experts in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR), non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), regional culture anthropologists, local political science experts, human resource management specialists, information operations specialists, and public affairs subject matter experts. This civilian element of the cell will provide stability and corporate knowledge in decisive areas for key military planners rotating through the G-5 every two years by continuous study and research of specific regions and/or by establishing relationships through local contacts over time. Similarly, G-5 civilians should be considered to handle this type of campaign planning if experience, trust, and expertise warrant. Thus, not having to dedicate

military planners to direct the efforts of the comprehensive engagement-planning cell would save time and human resources in the long run.

A MEF can implement this cell effectively by physically staffing it within the G-5. A MEF can also bolster this cell's interaction capabilities through hiring regional experts and placing other liaisons from the cell in embassies and decisive locations throughout the region. Through repetitive and habitual contact with embassies and the study of targeted cultures by subject matter experts, operational culture profiles can be designed and injected into the campaign design methodology used in Figure 2. A cell structured in this fashion can establish trust with embassies and other agencies, such as USAID and non-governmental organizations (NGO), which are and will be crucial to the success of comprehensive engagement and the building of United States-host nation relationships.

This permanent cell structured around members with regional expertise who will remain for longer periods of time than a normal military tour is also a decisive factor in maintaining a campaign that emphasizes Phase Zero operations. Specific representatives from the engagement cell must be required to work at the embassy and in-country at all times in order to maintain the trust and confidence of built relationships and to update the operational culture profile, as required. The comprehensive engagement campaign planning cell can subsequently update the campaign plan with this feedback. This feedback loop goes back to the commander and key planners to allow for the necessary staff redesigns that will most likely occur during an extended Phase Zero operation.

Conclusions

The Marine Corps has already proven that engagement-type activities that fit the criteria depicted in Figure 2 can have a positive impact on how other groups/nations view the United States. Disaster relief efforts in Indonesia and Pakistan are examples of positive perceptions of Americans based on operations that fit within comprehensive engagement. These types of operations can also open doors to groups/nations that do not know the United States that well and serve as launching points for comprehensive engagement campaigns.

Given the scenario for this paper, the enemy has leveled the playing field on the future battlefield. The United States will not be able to dictate the rules of the game with conventional force in every situation. Force will take on more than a conventional, kinetic meaning for the military through a comprehensive engagement strategy. The opportunity to use force under a comprehensive engagement strategy to persuade or convince unstable groups/nations to realize what their status quo is can be an immense stability and peace multiplier.

The Marine Corps must act now to be successful implementing this strategy in the future. MEFs must change planning mindsets, implement mechanisms, and make structural changes in order to support comprehensive engagement. Demonstrated and advertised success at the grass roots level will allow the necessary national level support for comprehensive engagement to develop.

The risk at the tactical level to use this type of strategy remains great. However, if the enemy chooses to take advantage Marines while they are conducting comprehensive engagement operations, the subsequent kinetic force used against the enemy will be more justified in the eyes of the American people and the world, which will significantly enhance the success of

comprehensive engagement. The benefits of using comprehensive engagement at the operational and strategic levels subsequently outweigh the tactical risks.

The American public is interested in what Marines do; people love to hear and see stories about the Marine Corps. The image of America's greatest warriors conducting humanitarian operations for needy people ravaged by bullies or unfortunate circumstance can go a long way in promoting a comprehensive engagement strategy. Killing the bully is easy; making him go away permanently is the problem that has yet to be solved. Success breeds support, and the American public and leadership on all levels, if properly informed, will support the time and resources required to make comprehensive engagement work.

Appendix A: Enemy Center of Gravity

Before a military adaptation of a comprehensive engagement strategy can be discussed for future wars, the enemy center of gravity (COG) must be analyzed. The Jihadist groups that are capable of conducting physical attacks, establishing bases, function independently, maintain political legitimacy, and spread ideology are the enemy’s primary source of strength. They are

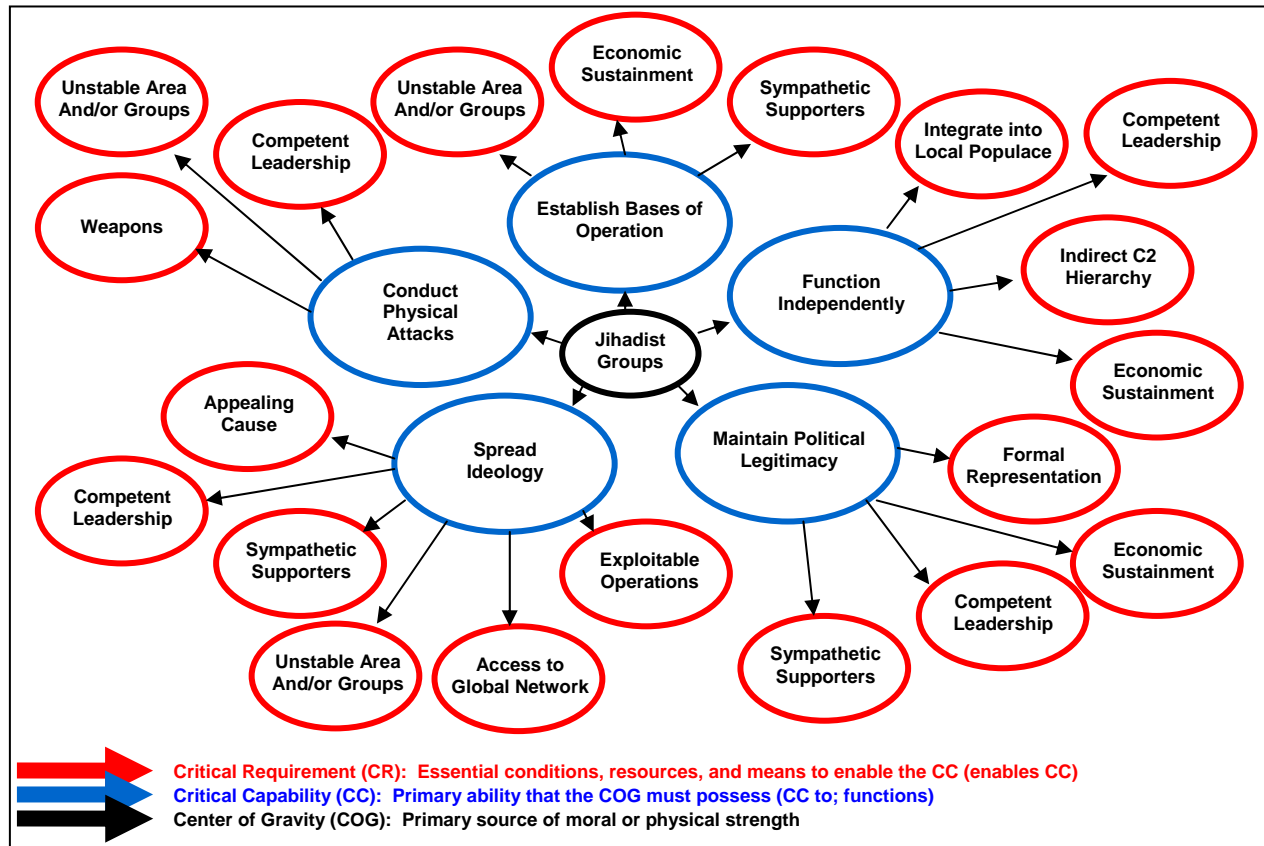


Figure 3: Enemy Center of Gravity

the hubs that, if taken out, eliminates their sphere of influence.

The enemy must have some sort of base to operate from on the local or larger level. “Jijadi influence is spreading in the Middle East, Africa, parts of Asia, and parts of Europe.”²⁸ Enemy groups with these spheres of influence must have bases of some kind, from individuals to small cells in villages to larger groups or training bases. The only areas that will accept these bases are already unstable and have a pool of people who may be sympathetic to the group or are too

unstable to do anything about it. Ultimately, this is the scenario that will provide an environment for the base to sustain itself economically as well. If the Jihadists have money in these areas, they will be able to sustain themselves.

The enemy must also be able to function independently, either at the individual level, small group, or something larger. To enable this, communication must take place across many dimensions in order to keep the enemy hidden, which also requires integration into the local population. This is an extremely challenging capability, and it requires a leader who is smart, resourceful, and can coordinate resources, economic sustainment, and operational planning across wide distances between operatives and cells, especially since 9/11. Closely tied to this is the ability to conduct physical attacks, which adds the complexity of creating weapons and capabilities to conduct high profile attacks while avoiding detection, and an unstable area and/or group where weapons can be built and employed.

Maintaining political legitimacy and spreading ideology are the other critical capabilities that are vital to jihadist cells. They both require sympathetic supporters and competent leadership to maintain. While spreading ideology adds the critical requirements of an unstable area, appealing cause, and exploitable operations, the formal representation requirement for political legitimacy has become an offshoot critical capability, and has given the enemy weapon for the future.

“Islamist activists scored impressive electoral victories in Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Turkey. In 2006, Hamas won a majority of Palestinian Parliamentary seats, reducing Fatah to the minority.”²⁹ While these groups may differ in precise adaptations of radical Islam, their gaining legitimate political power is a very dangerous trend for the future. It shows that radical ideology has the potential to be legitimized politically.

“Islamists and Jihadists use religion as a means to a political end, not as an end in itself.”³⁰

Religion is a tool to attain this political legitimacy. “Thus the key to understanding the jihadist and his journey lies in politics, not religion.”³¹ The key to their politics lies within the critical requirements of all the critical capabilities. Specifically, the political influence the appealing cause and exploitable operations, both enemy and friendly, have on the critical requirements of: (1) sympathetic supporters; (2) competent leadership, and (3) unstable areas/groups throughout all critical capabilities are the path to take to fight the Jihadists. “The enemy’s goal is to entrap the United States, progressively exhaust its military, and undermine its national will.”³² This becomes a political goal, and the United States must understand its own center of gravity before it can devise a strategy to fight it.

The target groups that, if given to radical Islam or its potential political influence, might turn against us and with them the indifferent part of their societies, usually encompassing a majority:

In my own view, Al Qaeda, Jamaah Islamiya, and the other radical groups see separatist groups as crucial centers of gravity in their global war to create an Islamist utopia. Bringing them into their camp would be a great victory; they work hard at proselytizing and persuasion.”³³

The target is the groups that the military has identified as the enemy, but might only want a better life. They may not be Al Qaeda, though their tactics may be similar. The difference is crucial. The campaign plan needs to target these groups with actions that will produce trust and cooperation so their grievances can be addressed in a stable process. If kinetic actions are used to try to eliminate them, the enemy will pounce and exploit this to the same target as “see, we told you so about the Americans.” The indifferent majority watch, creating the cycle where our conventional actions are exploited to make the United States military look bad. The cycle ends with the American people having access to these stories, and subsequently the military will lose support.

Some of these separatist groups end up forming micro-political organizations at the local level, and are the spawning ground for ideology development that may fall pray to radical Islam if the message offers something better. This reinforces the enemy’s center of gravity and why the military must take a much different approach in the future:

It was not enough to give them rhetoric or ideology; we had to offer them a path to a goal that would empower them --- a goal they could believe in, one that would meet immediate, tangible, and pressing needs...and one that was worth dying for. And we weren’t doing that. For the first time, it was hitting me that victory required more than most Americans imagined and that the war had dimensions beyond winning battles and counting dead enemies. It’s not enough to win battles: the people have to back your cause. The ordinary people, civil society, were the center of gravity, the key to victory.”³⁴

Vietnam should have taught the military that genuine, unconditional positive actions towards the indifferent majority and those borderline separatist groups must be part of actions

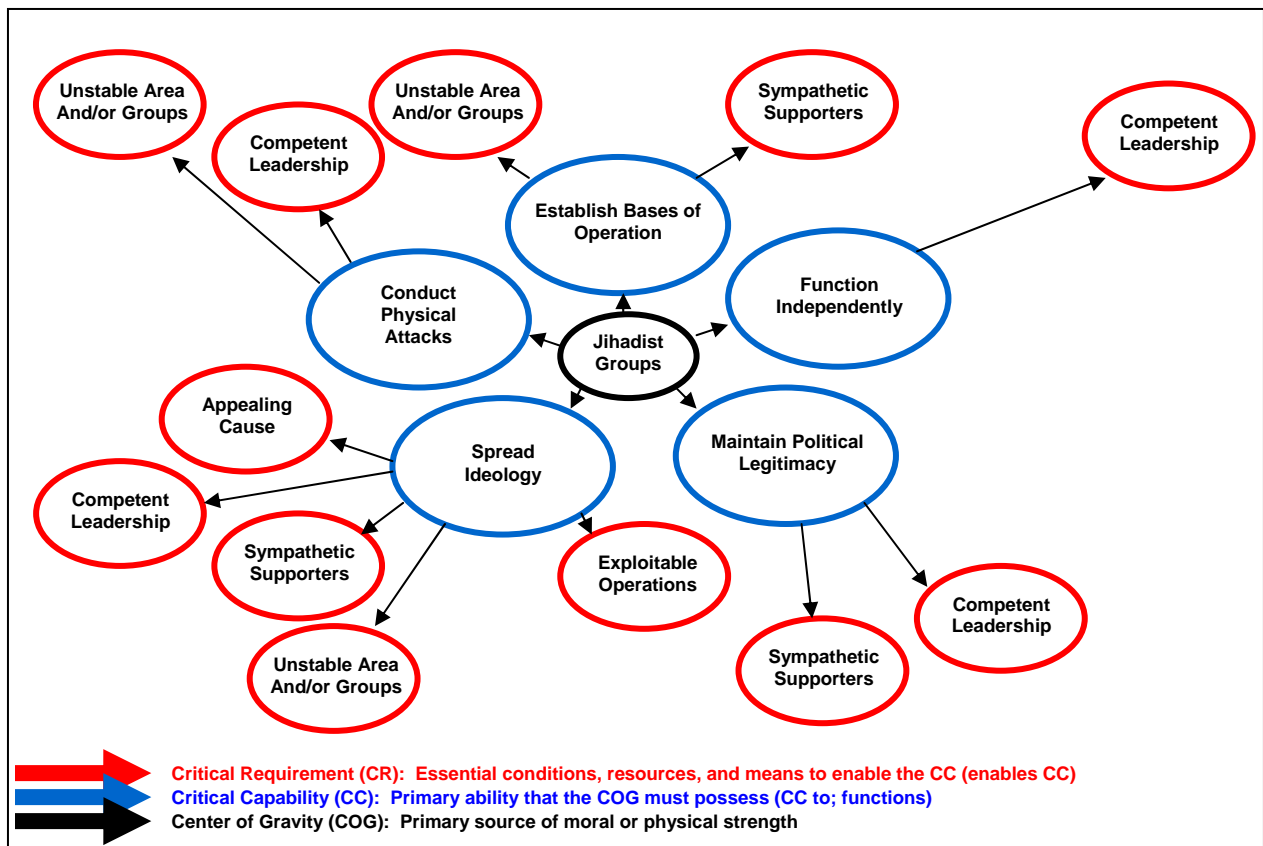


Figure 4: Key Enemy Critical Vulnerabilities

to shape environments where conventional kinetic actions may be inevitable. In this fashion, the comprehensive engagement strategy forms the beginning of any campaign against Al Qaeda. A path to counter Al-Qaeda's ideology lies within all critical capabilities, but the focal point is demonstrated in Figure 5. Since it is impossible to target everything, nor realistically deny Al-Qaeda's ability to collaborate in today's globalized world, each critical capability is left with the common critical requirements of competent leadership, sympathetic supporters, and unstable groups and/or areas. In addition to these, the critical capability to spread its ideology must have an appealing cause and exploitable operations. This is where the United States military can focus its campaigns. By using comprehensive engagement, Al-Qaeda's appeal in cause can be reduced while simultaneously taking away its ability to exploit conventional operations. This can be extremely effective in unstable areas during phase zero, and allow the military to attack critical vulnerabilities that are components of all of the enemy's critical capabilities.

Appendix B: Friendly Center of Gravity

The United States must understand itself before success is achieved. The center of gravity in the current and future fight rests with the American people. This bleeds right to the military.

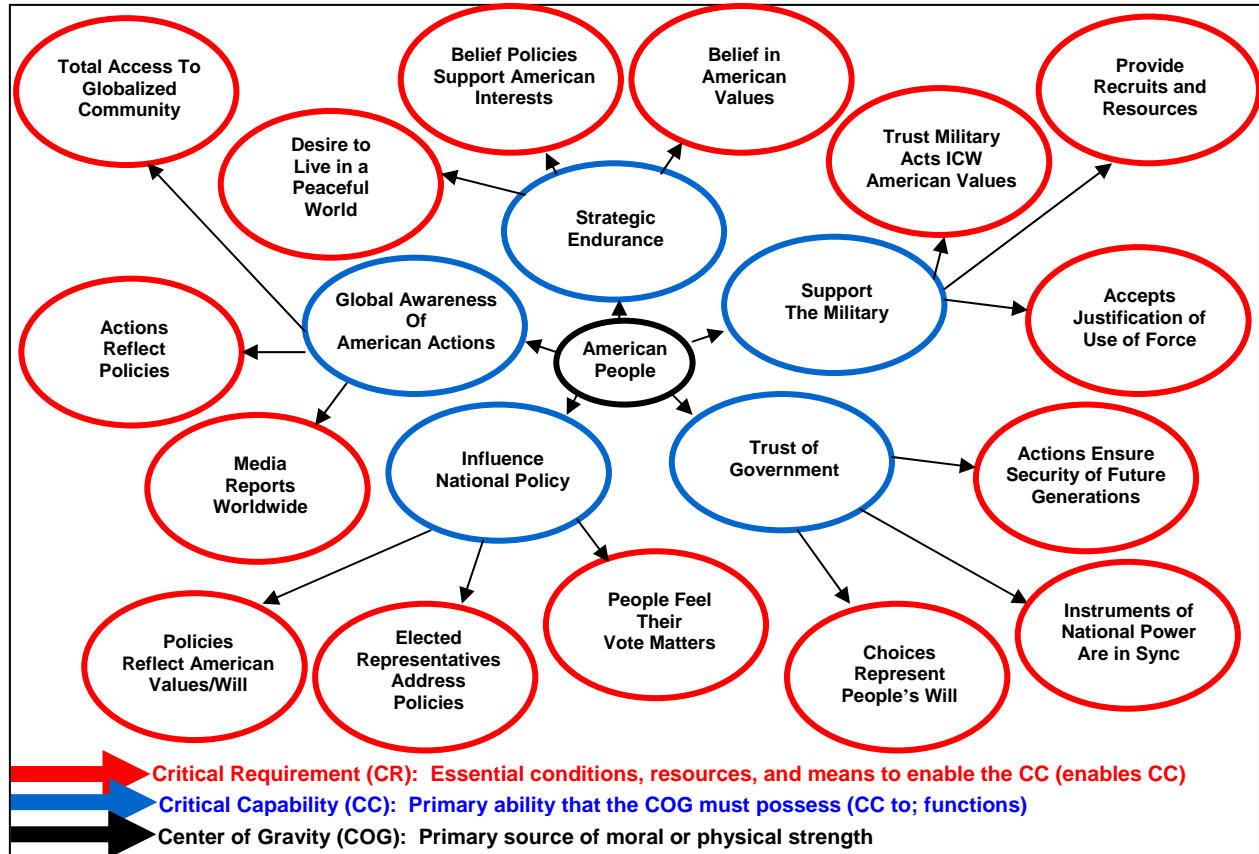


Figure 5: Friendly Center of Gravity

The American people must be able to trust the government, which closely relates to supporting the military. If the government is working productively to serve our national interests and protect America in this war, then the choices of actions it takes or strategy it develops must be one where the people support the cause and will support the military with resources, people, and morale. Most importantly, the people have to believe that the government and the military are working together towards goals that are in line with national interests and American ideals.

Despite some positive steps toward this objective, senior policymakers in and out of office in both the executive and legislative branches lament the continued inability of the United States

to integrate all elements of national power. Their frustrations apply not only to the national level, but also to the Country Team, the critical intersection where plans, policies, programs, and personalities all come together. The Country Team builds the American image abroad and implements strategy. Without an effective Country Team, there can be no prospect of success in achieving national security objectives. The question is whether Country Teams are structured properly and resourced sufficiently to be effective. A brief examination of the Country Team's evolution helps dispel some common misconceptions about the answer to this question.³⁵

The country team is a primary source of in-country contact for the Marine Corps. If they are not properly staffed and have political clout in America and the country, then it obviously is not in the loop with the American people or its ideals. This then boils down to the other critical capabilities.

Without a way to implement what the American people might accept as a policy abroad, strategic endurance and the capability of the people to believe they can influence national policy will wane. It falls to what the American people then perceive how our actions affect the world through the media's eyes. If the military is employed in a consistently negative fashion through the media lens to America, the people will not understand what is being accomplished. The image broadcast becomes one of us as an occupier rather than savior. This image causes us to suffer in the relationship with other nations as well as the American people (the military). "In fighting the War of Ideas, the Bush administration must reevaluate, revive, and upgrade its public diplomacy tool box, as well as invent new specific tools for fighting aggressive, anti-Western sentiment among fundamentalist groups and regimes, which support and tolerate them."³⁶

American actions have consequences. We are being viewed more and more like imperialists with a superiority complex, no matter what we might really feel.³⁷ After the invasion of Iraq, Muslims have been increasingly turning to a struggle to expel foreign occupiers (us) as opposed to flat out becoming a global jihadest. At this point, Muslims may start to feel they are

struggling to fight against a new Crusade.³⁸ This is extremely dangerous, and as America looks to other involvements with allies such as Israel, it becomes much more difficult for the American people to understand:

For many Muslims, the American occupation in Iraq represents a carbon copy of the Jewish occupation in Palestine. Both belong to the school of thought --- domination --- and the Iraqi and Palestinian people belong to another school of thought --- resistance and rejection of occupation. Hence the problem of foreign and internal jihadists fighting with the Sunni insurgents to bleed us --- a dangerous combination.³⁹

Acting as imperialists and persecuting Muslims to make us more powerful do not align with American ideals by any definition. The United States was not born out of that kind of cause. The more that perception is reinforced, the more vulnerable many of the people's critical capabilities become.

The United States can not withdraw from the world. The American empire, decides, in essence, how you shape your society by conscious and unconscious actions that we do everywhere.⁴⁰ However, "The United States may be "indispensable" to the stable operation of global order, but American voters are not really aware of this or much impressed by its imperatives."⁴¹ The American people tend to distance themselves from the problems of the world that, as a nation, we are intricately involved with, especially during the time of peace and prosperity after the Cold War. However, again, America has stabilized the world by creating an engineered political order built on our power and two primary post cold war exercises: (1) containment; and (2) primary relationships with Western industrial democracies. This obviously leaves some out who want to be a player in this process.⁴² America helped construct this world order, and now the people must prepare to be strong for the future.

The enemy understands this, and attacks critical vulnerabilities accordingly. The global awareness of American actions becomes the key critical capability where the enemy attacks the

United States. Most Americans have access to real-time media reporting and any collaborative forum on the internet where the enemy can exploit conventional military operations in a negative fashion. When actions reflect things that go against what Americans feel is out of character,

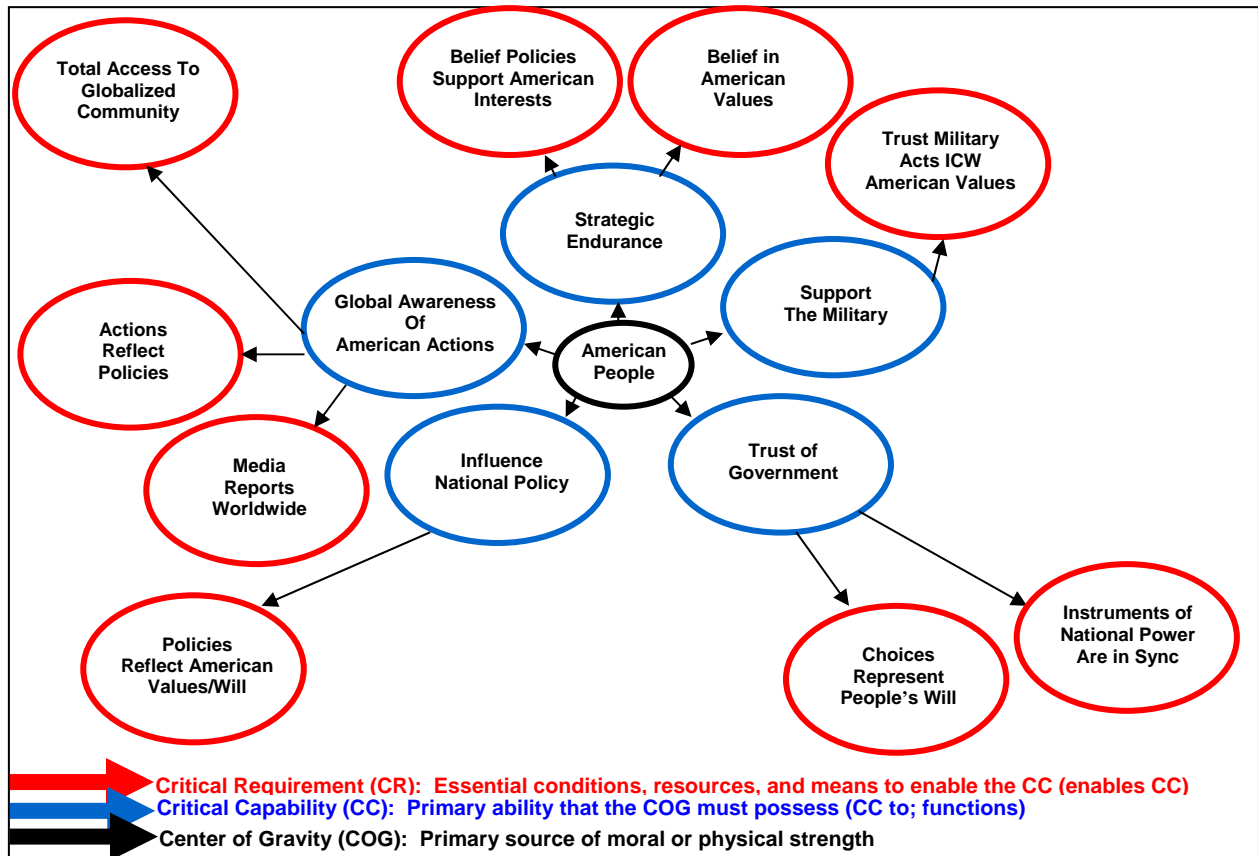
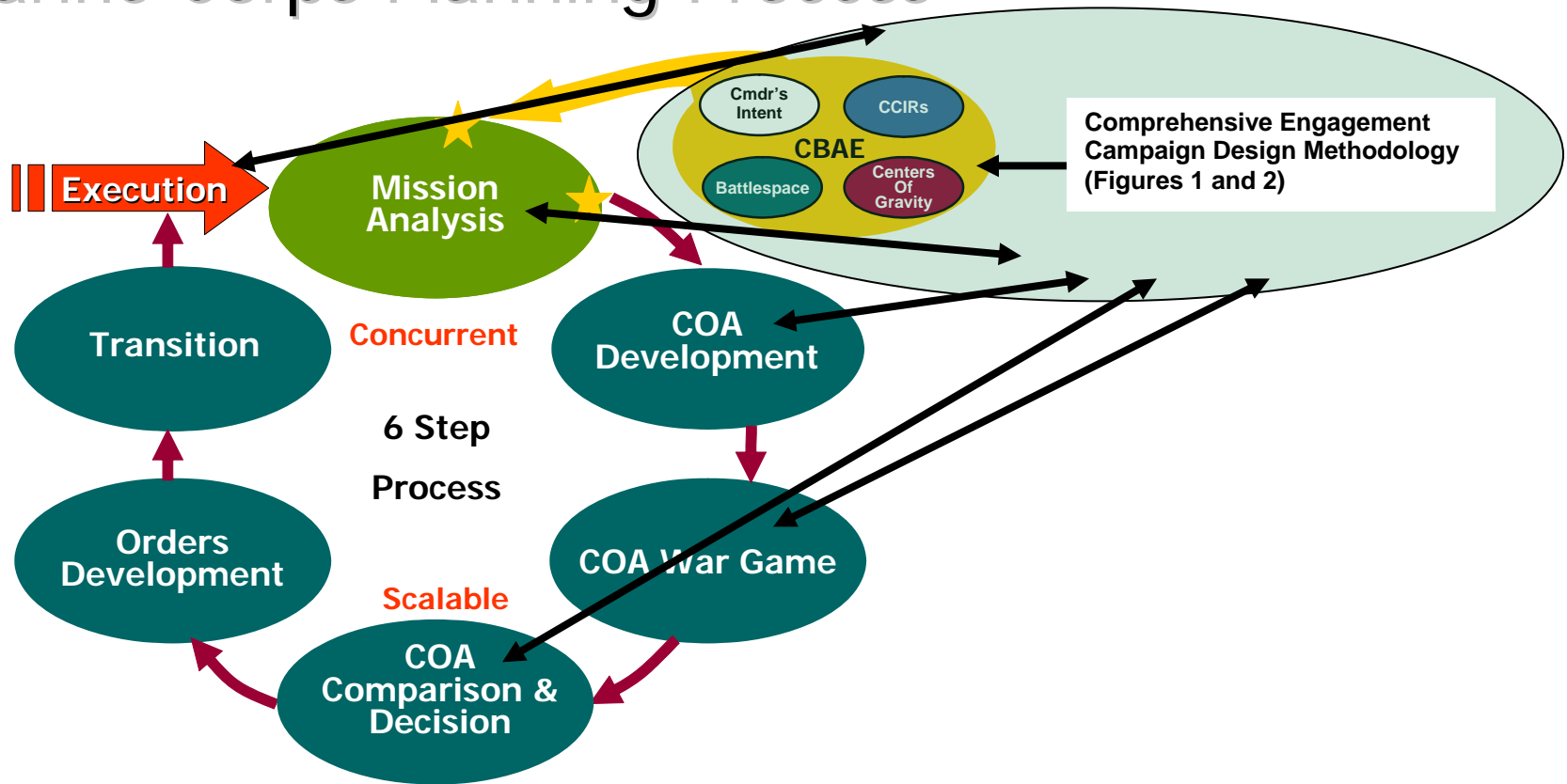


Figure 6: Key Friendly Critical Vulnerabilities

policies will subsequently be questioned. If the American people feel that they do not have a say in policies that reflect American character and will, it will undermine trust and influence critical requirements across the spectrum. This kind of an effect bogs the government down, and the instruments of national power will be out of sync, especially the military as it relates to everything else. Since the military is out there conducting action, things can become disjointed and confusing quickly, which helps the enemy's strategy. By protecting America's critical vulnerabilities through comprehensive engagement, the United States can turn its critical requirements into a cycle that strengthens the will of the American people through unexploitable

actions portrayed to the globe in reports and forums that will shape unstable areas to perceive America is truly attempting to help restore their status quo vice using imperialism to shape societies as America sees fit. This will stall the enemy's attempt to use conventional actions in the same pipeline of information distribution to promote their ideology as the better way. The winning formula revolves around the Phase Zero battle of conducting comprehensive engagement over a long period of time and getting the right messages and stories to the American people. This will in turn bring the instruments of national power in sync. The end result is a balance of the people, the government, and the military, validating Clausewitz' trinity as an indicator of a balanced national strategy that promotes true national interests.

Marine Corps Planning Process



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27. A summary from the earthquake relief operations in Pakistan in 2005:

The military played the decisive role, and the Marine Corps was a significant part of it. It is an example of a reaction to a humanitarian crisis, and it was the right thing to do. It was not linked directly to any self-serving national interest, though the reality is that it helps. The enemy would find it hard-pressed to exploit this event negatively, especially to those who needed out medical care to prevent their deaths. The American people like these kinds of missions. It falls in line with military operations that set the right conditions against the current enemy. The only thing missing is to link these kinds of actions into a higher plan of comprehensive engagement, and to initiate this kind of humanitarian assistance in areas not necessarily due to disasters, but to help stabilize areas and achieve status quo. Admiral LeFevor, commander of the Joint Task Force that responded, stated:

“You don’t go into something like this thinking about what impact it will have on your image. You go into it focusing on doing the right thing to help people.”

The earthquake relief effort in Pakistan created a remarkable construct: a relationship between states and peoples significantly improved at every level of society. Flexibility and the ability to quickly build a team from vastly different organizations were the characteristics that enabled mission success. The “soft infrastructure” composed of interpersonal relationships and in-country connections was invaluable. The humanitarian assistance to the people of northern Pakistan set the example for interagency and international cooperation in the face of a complex humanitarian disaster and furthered U.S. goals in the area of operations by facilitating favorable interactions between U.S. personnel and the inhabitants of the region. (insert cite here)

The Marine Corps was able to execute similar operations for the Tsunami relief efforts in Indonesia in 2003 and again in Indonesia in 2006 for earthquake relief. The key to these operations is that they improved Muslim perceptions of Americans far above what it had been prior to the disasters. However, American favorability declined steadily as time separated the relief efforts from our presence in any helpful way ---- suggesting that consistent help from a humanitarian perspective will be key to sustaining support in the future (Sources: Kenneth J. Braithwaite. “U.S. Humanitarian Aid/Disaster Relief: Keys to Success in Pakistan.” Joint Forces Quarterly 44, no. 1 (2007), 19-22; and Curtis, Lisa A. “America’s Image Abroad: Room for Improvement.” Heritage Lectures, 26 April 2007 <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/hl1027.cfm>).

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